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AN ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD: POTENTIAL COOPERATION BETWEEN MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AND AL QAEDA OR ISIS

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by

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The likelihood of cooperative relationships between Mexican drug cartels and Al Qaeda's core or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a matter of debate and U.S. national security. Despite the significance of the issue, the topic is widely void of objective analysis. When analyzed and compared, the organizational attributes of strategy toward the United States, group identity, ideology, and decision-making authority show stark differences between these groups. With these organizational attributes established and then placed in the context of what makes cooperative relationships work within the private sector, cooperation between groups emerges as highly unlikely. While the occurrence of a relationship between these groups is doubtful, if it were to occur, the implications to U.S. national security could be catastrophic. As such, this thesis concludes with a policy recommendation that the United States must continue to publicly monitor the potential relationships to deter them.

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ABSTRACT

The likelihood of cooperative relationships between Mexican drug cartels and Al Qaeda's core or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a matter of debate and U.S. national security. Despite the significance of the issue, the topic is widely void of objective analysis. When analyzed and compared, the organizational attributes of strategy toward the United States, group identity, ideology, and decision-making authority show stark differences between these groups. With these organizational attributes established and then placed in the context of what makes cooperative relationships work within the private sector, cooperation between groups emerges as highly unlikely. While the occurrence of a relationship between these groups is doubtful, if it were to occur, the implications to U.S. national security could be catastrophic. As such, this thesis concludes with a policy recommendation that the United States must continue to publicly monitor the potential relationships to deter them.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AQ	Al Qaeda
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de
ISIS	Colombia Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
La Familia	La Familia Michoacana
TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban

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I. FRAMING THE ISSUE

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis seeks to answer the question: What conditions, if any, could result in operational cooperation between Mexican drug cartels and Al Qaeda's core (AQ) or The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)?

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This thesis identifies conditions, if any, that could result in operational cooperation between Mexican drug cartels and Islamic transnational terrorist groups. Historically, some governmental organizations and the media have speculated on this topic because of oversimplified use of terminology and a lack of understanding of how such factors as organizational identity and intra-group trust, strategy, ideology, and organizational structure influence violent sub-state groups' decision-making. Admittedly, a proven nexus between *narcotics* and *terrorism* does exist in some countries at some times; however, this does not imply a direct cooperative relationship between these organizations everywhere.

Narco-terrorism has been argued to be both a *means* and an *end,* which further confuses what narco-terrorism is and where a nexus between the two exist—as well as if that nexus is a cooperative relationship. Peruvian counter drug units first coined narco-terrorism in 1983 as a descriptor for the use of terror tactics by drug organizations.[1] The United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) now defines narco-terrorism as "participation of groups or associated individuals in taxing, providing security for, otherwise aiding or abetting drug trafficking endeavors in an effort to further, or fund terrorist activities."[2] Notably, the Peruvian description is referring to narco-terrorism as an *ends*, and the DEA is referring to narco-terrorism as a *means*, which represents the confluence of narco-trafficking and terrorism. Looking at case studies of narco-terrorism

[1] Jonas Hartelius, *Narcoterrorism (Policy Paper 3/2008)* (Stockholm, Sweden and New York, NY: EastWest Institute and the Swedish Carnegie Institute, 2008), 1. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/90550/2008-02-20_Narcoterrorism.pdf.

[2] Hartelius, Narcoterrorism (Policy Paper 3/2008), 2.

provides no additional clarity on the topic of what narco-terrorism actually is, as it can be explained as both a means and an end.

For example, Mexican drug cartels have used terrorism as an end. From 2010–2012, the cartels detonated 21 car bombs with the objective of targeting police.[3] In addition, Mexican drug cartels regularly conduct beheadings and dismemberment of enemies for propaganda[4] purposes, a method that bears a striking resemblance to the modus operandi of ISIS. While these examples represent using terrorism as an end, political motivation is absent, which, as I will demonstrate later, is a critical component to actual terrorist organizations.

Conversely, both the Taliban and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) have well-known relationships within the drug trade. The Taliban's involvement in the heroin trade has created an environment where commanders are more interested in the drug market than their ideological motivations.[5] Additionally, the FARC has been cited as generating between $2.4 and $3.5 billion annually in cocaine revenue.[6] The previous examples highlight the complexity of the issue. Due to this, Mullins and Wither warn that "it is essential that we do not over-generalize" and the nuanced relationship between terrorist and criminal organizations and behavior presents significant challenges to law enforcement agencies and counter terrorism efforts.[7]

Miller and Damask describe the relationship between the narcotics trade and terrorism as a "prima-facie" myth in which the concept exceeds its "precise and even operational definitions" that has historically served the agendas of both the George H. W. Bush and Reagan administrations.[8] By 1986, under the Reagan administration, several U.S. officials warned that, "America's porous borders have become an open invitation to world

[3] Sam Mullins and James K. Wither, "Terrorism and Organized Crime," *Connections: Quarterly Journal* 15, no. 3 (2016): 73.

[4] Mullins and Wither, "Terrorism and Organized Crime," 70.

[5] Mullins and Wither, 74.

[6] Mullins and Wither, 74.

[7] Mullins and Wither, 77.

[8] Abraham H. Miller and Nicholas A. Damask, "The Dual Myths of 'Narco-Terrorism': How Myths Drive Policy," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8, no. 1 (1996): 114, doi: 10.1080/09546559608427336.

terrorists" and narco-terrorism was increasing.[9] Specifically, U.S. Customs Commissioner William von Raab stated that "Mexican law-enforcement officials are being corrupted by drug smugglers" and that "law enforcement can just as easily be bought by terrorists."[10] By 2000, Robert Charles, the former chief of staff for U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Government Reform's subcommittee on national security, and manager of the House Speaker's Task Force for a Drug-Free America,[11] referred to the relationship of terrorism and drug smugglers as, "a hedonistic marriage of design...These groups are now linked at the hip, and they are extremely wealthy."[12] Though this opinion is from 2000, recent media coverage from the current Trump Administration confirms that this belief has not changed in recent years and the topic of operational cooperation between Mexican drug cartels and transnational Islamic terrorist groups, particularly AQ or ISIS remains debated and politicized. In a recent reflection on the Obama administration, White House Chief of Staff,[13] John Kelly recalled that cooperative relationships between terrorist and drug cartels were "bad for business" in the eyes of the cartels.[14] Yet, under the Trump administration, the potential for these same cooperative relationships are "what keeps him up at night."[15] Lastly, cooperation is often broadly referred to, but rarely defined during discussion of the topic. As noted by Mullins and Wither, "there is still ongoing disagreement about the extent of overlap between the worlds of terrorism and organized crime."[16] Both White House Chief of Staff John Kelly[17] and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have been reported as

[9] John Dillin, "Spies, Terrorists & U.S. Border," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 24, 1986, 1.

[10] Dillin, "Spies, Terrorists & U.S. Border,"1.

[11] John G. Roos, "The Enemy Next Door," *Armed Forces International* (March 2000): 40.

[12] Roos, "The Enemy Next Door," 40.

[13] At the time of John Kelly's comments, he was serving as the United States Secretary of Homeland Security

[14] David Sherfinski and Stephen Dinan, "Smuggling by International Crime Syndicates Is What Keeps Homeland Security Chief up at Night," *The Washington Times*, April 18, 2017, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/apr/18/john-kelly-smuggling-cartels-major-threat/.

[15] Sherfinski and Dinan, "Smuggling by International Crime Syndicates Is What Keeps Homeland Security Chief Up at Night."

[16] Mullins and Wither, "Terrorism and Organized Crime," 65.

[17] At the time of John Kelly's comments, he was serving as the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security

confirming ties and connections between terrorist and criminal networks.[18] The DEA has also reported that of the 43 listed foreign terrorist organizations, 19 of them have known ties to drug trafficking organizations.[19]

Juxtaposed to this, in 2008, Charles Allen, the Homeland undersecretary for intelligence and analysis reported that "we know of no trained al Qaeda operatives who have crossed over our southern border," as well as, "We do know that going back to 2004, the southern border is something that Al Qaeda's central leadership has looked at. But we know of no specifics of where Al Qaeda has really endeavored to cross our borders in the south."[20] Additionally, as of 2009, research by Lanzante notes that 50% (5 out of 10) homeland security officials he interviewed regarding cooperative relationships between drug trafficking organizations and terrorist organizations did not believe that the two organizations would engage in a relationship, as no empirical evidence has been observed by them to substantiate a relationship.[21] Miller and Damask provide a possible explanation by suggesting that this overlap is far more "tangential and ephemeral" than some individuals are willing to accept.[22] Additionally, the media implies the relationship as being cooperative.[23] This is not necessarily the case, ties and connections can be "cooperative, exploitative or competitive; short or long-term; small or large scale; voluntary or involuntary; direct or indirect; deliberate or unwitting."[24] The lack of precise language has left the topic highly subjective, and void of methodical analysis to ascertain the likelihood of meaningful cooperative relationships between Mexican drug cartels and transnational

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[18] Elena Toledo, "US Government Confirms Connection between Mexican Drug Cartels and ISIS," *PANAMPOST*, June 15, 2017, https://panampost.com/elena-toledo/2017/06/15/us-government-confirms-connection-between-mexican-drug-cartels-and-isis/

[19] Douglas Farah, "Fixers, Super Fixers and Shadow Facilitators: How Networks Connect," (Alexandria, VA: International Assessment and Strategy Center, accessed August 18, 2017), 2, http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/Articles/Fixers_Super-Fixers_and_Shadow_Facilitators_Farah.pdf.

[20] Randall Mikkelsen, "No Signs of Qaeda at U.S.-Mexican Border: Official," *Reuters*, April 11, 2008, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-security-usa-qaeda-idUSN1115689520080411

[21] Joseph Lanzante, "The Relationship between Criminal and Terrorist Organizations and Human Smuggling" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009).

[22] Miller and Damask, "The Dual Myths of 'Narco-Terrorism': How Myths Drive Policy," 114-115.

[23] Toledo, "US Government Confirms Connection between Mexican Drug Cartels and ISIS."

[24] Mullins and Wither, "Terrorism and Organized Crime," 71.

Islamic terrorist organizations such as AQ or ISIS. Similar to the three preceding decades, the extent of cooperation between Mexican drug cartels and transnational terrorist groups remains inconclusive, yet its relevance to national security has not waned.

Aside from the political debate, the nature of the identities of ISIS or AQ and Mexican drug cartels present conflicting perspectives of the likelihood of cooperation between the two groups. The motivations of the groups suggest that cooperation is unlikely; however, the structure of the organizations suggests that cooperation is possible. While both want to make money, material incentives motivate cartels, and violence is meant "to protect themselves and their illicit enterprises from being shut down."[25] Conversely, non-material incentives motivate transnational Islamic terrorist groups and the existence of relationships to drug organizations could degrade their strategic narrative and popular support. As stated by Dishman, "terrorist groups are reluctant to cooperate with narcotics syndicates, cognizant that any involvement in drug trafficking – and especially enduring cooperation with a narcotics syndicate – would fuel state campaigns aiming to poison the terrorists' image."[26] Lastly, despite the risk associated with it, research conducted by Phillips of 41 terrorist groups with known relationships to drug trafficking showed that this relationship does not increase the group's likelihood of survivability.[27] Based on these observations, the organizational agendas of both groups makes the relationship counter-intuitive, difficult to assess, and subject to speculation.

Despite motivational differences, similar structures of cartels and transnational terrorist organizations may explain why cooperative relationships between terrorist and narco activities may have emerged in recent history and have become of increasing concern. Both cartels and terrorist organizations have adopted more networked approaches to organizational structure, which has increased autonomy among lower levels.[28] According to Picarelli, "networked forms of organization are giving criminals and terrorists

[25] Mullins and Wither, "Terrorism and Organized Crime," 70.

[26] Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (2001): 46, doi: 10.1080/10576100118879.

[27] Brian J. Phillips, "How Terrorist Organizations Survive: Cooperation and Competition in Terrorist Group Networks" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2012): 69, 87.

[28] Mullins and Wither, "Terrorism and Organized Crime," 65–82, 69.

greater opportunity, and motive, for collaborating with one another."[29] Although advantages may be present, they do come at some cost and creates what has been referred to as the terrorist's dilemma.[30] This dilemma occurs when a terrorist organization shifts to a decentralized structure, thus losing the ability to command and control their cells.[31] With this in mind, the author assesses that the potential for cooperation increases yet it remains unknown whether the ties and connections between Mexican drug cartels and transnational Islamic terrorist groups such as AQ or ISIS, reported as existing, represent individual decisions or official sanctioned behaviors.

In conclusion, the high level of ambiguity in terminology, the absence of a convincing explanations for cooperation, and the inability to distinguish organizational from individual actions degrades the ability to determine the conditions that would result in operational cooperation between a AQ and ISIS and a Mexican drug cartel. To achieve results based on empirical data and logic of this likelihood, this thesis provides academic rigor and a methodical approach to the problem—which have been absent to date.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

Critical to the understanding of the likelihood for cooperative relationships to occur between Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS are three foundational categories of information that require research. These three focus areas are: (a) an understanding of the problems associated with the generation and maintenance of operational momentum that are inherent to criminal enterprises—mobilization (b) commonalities and differences in the organizational structures of criminal groups, (c) the positive and negative implications of

[29] John T. Picarelli, "Osama bin Corleone? Vito the Jackal? Framing Threat Convergence through an Examination of Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (March 2012): 186, doi: 10.1080/09546553.2011.648349.

[30] Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 22; David Tucker, "Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy: Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong," *Homeland Security Affairs* 4, no. 5 (June 2008):11–8. https://www.hsaj.org/articles/122.

[31] Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*, 22. ; Tucker, "Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy: Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong,"11–8.

establishing cooperative relationships between criminal groups—alliances. The review of literature on these three categories of information includes scholarly publications, press articles, government reports and military doctrinal publications on terrorism, a limited number of primary source documents available through the exploitation of documents captured from terrorist organizations, as well as the adaptation of theories on business alliances to fit the framework of criminal enterprises. Additionally, the majority of available resources concerning cooperative relationships center on terrorist organizations; however, this literature is widely applicable to Mexican drug cartels. Since both organizations are illegal in nature and must be self-reliant opposed to the ability to leverage formal institutions to govern their behavior, relationships, or operations similarities exist. While all categories are interrelated, the subsequent literature review discusses each independently.

2. Commonalities in Concerns with Mobilization—Differences in the Means of Mitigation

Criminal organizations (to include drug cartels and terrorist organizations) like most organizations need to cultivate the continued mobilization of resources in order to remain competitive within their arena. By analogy, terrorist campaigns have been described as being "like a shark in the water: it must keep moving forward—no matter how slowly or incrementally—or die."[32] This same descriptor could be used for Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS alike given that they often operate in competitive environments in which maintaining an edge over rivals is an imperative. As one example, Stanford University's work on mapping militant groups notes that the ISIS has competitive relationships and rivalries with the Free Syrian Army, Ansar al Islam, The Islamic Front, Tahrir al-Sham, and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.[33] In the case of Mexican drug cartels, the Congressional Research Service, as of 2017, suggests that between nine and twenty drug trafficking organizations are competing for market share creating an environment far "more

[32] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism, Revised and Expanded Edition*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2006), 234.

[33] Stanford University, "Mapping Militant Organizations," accessed August 29, 2017, http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/

competitive than in the past."[34] A common denominator for criminal enterprises, terrorist organizations and drug cartels alike, due to the competitive and illegal environment in which they operate in is that they must continuously mobilize resources.

Multiple authors from a variety of different backgrounds have published material on the importance of the mobilization of resources in order to sustain armed groups to achieve their desired end states.[35] Some of these authors focus their research and analysis on specific areas of mobilization; however, the key resources that require mobilization are: (a) people with the will to participate, (b) means that achieve organizational goals (to include money and material), and (c) leadership through command and control to provide strategic direction.[36]

3. Human Resource Mobilization

Mexican drug cartels and transnational terrorist groups diverge in mobilization through member's incentives. AQ and ISIS use non-material incentives to mobilize people and resources; this is not to say that money is absent, rather that monetary gain does not motivate members. For example, Al-Qaeda in Iraq based their structure for monetary compensation around basic needs of individuals and their family size as opposed to position and performance of responsibilities.[37] According to Waldmann, the true motivation of ethnic terrorist is "a real or fictive threat to the ethnic group (ethnic, religious, or regional) because of a directly experienced threat to that group."[38] Additionally, transnational Islamic terrorist organizations must maintain a connection and relevancy within the

[34] June S. Beittel, *Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations* (CRS Report No. R41576) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), 10, 24. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41576.pdf.

[35] Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1977), https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/50931/156.pdf; Central Intelligence Agency, *The Supporters of International Terrorism* (1981), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84B00274R000100040012-9.pdf; Anthony Vinci, "The 'Problems of Mobilization' and The Analysis of Armed Groups," *Parameters* 36, no. 1 (2006); Phillips, "How Terrorist Organizations Survive: Cooperation and Competition in Terrorist Group Networks."

[36] Vinci, "The 'Problems of Mobilization' and the Analysis of Armed Groups," 51.

[37] Shapiro, The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations, 111.

[38] Peter Waldmann, "Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism: A Comparison of Structures," *International Social Movement Research* 4 (1992): 244.

community in which they represent as "they rely on the support and sympathy of great percentage of the populace who share the terrorists' ambitions."[39] In the case of a drug cartel, while concerned with brand image and popular perception, the organization does not rely on ideological alignment with its members. On the other hand, drug cartels mobilize people through material incentive and the hope for future gain. While being interviewed by Smith, Nieto-Gomez observed that aspiration and ambition to achieve the prosperity of drug cartel kingpins is a high-level motivator for individuals to participate in and support drug cartel operations, regardless of the risk associated with it.[40]

In summary, cartels can be destroyed by competition and state sponsored counter-drug operations, but the global demand for drugs seems to sustain them, whereas, terrorist organizations can be destroyed through competition, counter-terrorism operations, but also from their ideological motivations fizzling out among members. Several key components regarding the nature of mobilizing people come to light in the review of this literature and are as follows: (a) Illegal sub-state actors operate in a competitive environment that demands continued mobilization to protect against organizational collapse, (b) While both Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS must contend with issues in the mobilization of personnel, their tools of motivation vary, (c) based on the tools used to mobilize personnel a level in divergence between the groups' behaviors is observable.

Additionally, based on how these groups manage issues with mobilization of personnel resources it is worthwhile to examine different types of business models. The terrorist organization could be classified as a non-profit group as opposed to a Mexican drug cartel that could be classified as a for profit organization, the distinct delineation between the two being:

> A business or other organization whose primary goal is making money (a profit), as opposed to a non profit organization which focuses a goal such

[39] Waldmann, "Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism: A Comparison of Structures," 244.

[40] Rory Smith, "How Drug Cartels Operate Like Silicon Valley Startups," *Motherboard*, September 16, 2016, https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/9a3z4a/how-drug-cartels-operate-like-silicon-valley-startups.

> as helping the community and is concerned with money only as much as necessary to keep the organization operating.[41]

Given the path divergence between transnational terrorist organizations and Mexican drug cartels, the question remains whether these two organizations can overcome mobilization differences to achieve cooperative relationships.

4. Capital Mobilization

This issue of revenue generation/mobilization must also be addressed with regard to commonalities and differences between Mexican drug cartels and transnational Islamic Terrorist organizations. Both criminal organizations rely on multiple organizational funding streams that generally mirror each other. Mexican drug cartels have been described as becoming "poly-crime" organizations, given that in addition to the drug trade, they now engage in criminal activity such as kidnapping, assassinations, grand theft auto, human smuggling, and grand larceny.[42] Transnational terrorist organizations generate revenue in two categories: the first being gray economies defined as the "combination of licit and illicit activities perpetrated by terrorist and insurgent groups for monetary gain" including: diaspora support, charities, fraud, legal business, and money laundering;[43] the second being a dark economy defined as "entirely illicit and illegal, with little room for interpretation" including: kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery and theft, smuggling, drug trafficking and counterfeiting, and extortion.[44] Where the divergent characteristics in monetary mobilization emerge is the need for AQ or ISIS to guard against how their popular support base will react to their activities. Substantiating this claim, Waldman as well as an intelligence assessment published by the CIA support the idea that terrorist must guard

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[41] "For Profit Organization," Businessdictionary, accessed August, 29, 2017, http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/for-profit-organization.html.

[42] Beittel, Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations, 24–25.

[43] Colin P. Clarke, Terrorism Inc.: The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare, (Santa Barbara, CA: Prager Security International, 2015), 5–7.

[44] Clarke, Terrorism Inc.: The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare, 5–7; John Rollins and Liana Sun Wyler, Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Foreign Policy Issues for Congress (CRS Report No. R41004) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 11, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R41004.pdf.

against how the sources of their monetary mobilization will be perceived by their support base.[45]

Lastly, the role of leadership and command and control in the context of mobilization will be discussed within the following section as it largely pertains to the organizational structure adopted by the criminal organization itself.

5. Organizational Structure in Relation to Command and Control and Strategic Direction

Two primary criminal structures exist common to both cartels and terrorists groups, each having characteristics that provide advantages and disadvantages to the organization: the hierarchy and the network. The base unit of both design structures is the cell[46]; however, the characteristics and responsibility of the cell vary based on the organizational structure adopted by the terrorist organization. According to *A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, hierarchical structures "have a well-defined vertical chain of command, control, and responsibility" in which command and control flows vertically within the organization without a requirement to move horizontally between organizational cells.[47] Cell structure provides specialization for the overall organization, and the cell leader is typically the only one who communicates with adjacent cells or higher echelons of command within the organizational structure.[48] Networked organizations, on the other hand, operate under a decentralized model of command and control which limit communications between cells and higher echelons of command. Cells operate with a level of autonomy basing operations on the intent rather than the order of a higher command.[49] Within a network structure, the inherent autonomy of the cells makes the cells less

[45] Waldmann, "Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism: A Comparison of Structures," 247; Central Intelligence Agency, *Drug Trafficking: The Role of Insurgents, Terrorist, and Sovereign States* (1983), 4, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00283R000300010008-6.pdf.

[46] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2007), 3-2.

[47] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *A Military Guide to Terrorism*, 3-6.

[48] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 3-6.

[49] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 3-6.

specialized as all aspects of organizational functions are integral to the cell itself.[50] The greatest delineation between the two models is the frequency of contact between the subordinate cells and the legitimate authorities of command.[51]

The topic of covert organizational structure remains debated. Kenny describes drug trafficking and terrorist organizations structures as highly networked, characterized by having flat authority, quick information dissemination and decision making cycles.[52] Yet authors such as Tucker refute this by showing that prior to 9/11, Al Qaeda was hierarchical in structure and that not all nodes had equal authority.[53] Additionally, primary source documents recovered from the Bin Laden raid in Pakistan seem to support at least some level of hierarchy even after 9/11 given that subordinate nodes continued to seek direction from senior leadership.[54] Organizations such as ISIS tend to be thought of as highly networked, given the expansiveness of their operations, yet much like Al Qaeda, its organizational structure distinctly includes hierarchy and bureaucracy. Its structure starts with Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi at the top and breaks down into eleven different structures each with a different functional area of responsibility.[55] Within this structure, the Security and Intelligence Council serves as the conduit to provide "directives from the Central Leadership team and Caliph."[56] Despite this structure, some of the behaviors still point to some levels of autonomy. Salman Abedi who attacked patrons of the Ariana Grande concert on 22 May 2017 in the Manchester Arena, UK was reported as affiliated with ISIL

[50] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 3-6.

[51] Tucker, "Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy: Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong," 3.

[52] Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, "Book Review, From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Advantage by Michael Kenny," *International Public Management Journal* 10, no. 4 (2007): 449.

[53] Tucker, "Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy," 2.

[54] "Bin Laden's Bookshelf," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, accessed September 5, 2017, https://www.dni.gov/index.php/features/bin-laden-s-bookshelf?start=1

[55] Ligon et al., *The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles* (College Park, MD: Department of Homeland Science and Technology Directorate's Office of University Programs, July 2017), 10.

[56] Ligon et al., *The Jihadi Industry*, 8.

leading up to the moments before the attack.[57] Despite this, the author has been unable to identify any information that suggests Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi directed this attack. Furthermore, postponing the attack to target UK election polls a little more than a week later would seem to nest better with ISIL narrative suggesting decentralization in organizational design.

The organizational structure of drug cartels is as murky as terrorist organizations. Natajaran, whose research relied heavily on analysis of wiretap conversations, states that "the analysis confirmed that the organization was of the 'corporate' type, involving a large number of individuals, clear division of labor and a recognizable hierarchy."[58] Yet in contrast to this, Benson, whose research relied on the interviewing of incarcerated individuals associated with drug smuggling operations, suggests that evidence supports a notion that "drug smugglers work in groups that are horizontal rather than vertical. That is, orders or commands seldom come from a centralized authority communicated down an organizational structure."[59]

In determining which organization model drug cartels, AQ, and ISIS employ, it is worth looking at what effects the disruption of central leadership played on these organizations. Since the death of Osama Bin Laden on May 2011, Al Qaeda Central has not achieved any high profile attacks (that the author is aware of) that can be attributed to the organization. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's declaration as the Caliph sparked an unprecedented amount of foreign fighters going to Iraq and Syria to support jihad.[60] Lastly, the capture and extradition of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman appears to have created a power vacuum within the Sinaloa Cartel and sparked significant violence for control of the drug

[57] Nicola Harley and Adam Nathan, "Manchester Bomber Was 'Controlled by ISIL Group behind Paris Attacks," *The Telegraph*, June 3, 2017, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/03/manchester-bomber-controlled-isil-group-behind-paris-attacks/.

[58] Mangai Natarajan, "Understanding The Structure of a Drug Trafficking Organization: A Conversational Analysis," *Crime Prevention Studies* 11, (2000): 273.

[59] Jana S. Benson and Scott Decker, "The Organizational Structure of International Drug Smuggling," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 38, (2010): 136.

[60] Grame Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/

market share.[61] While these organizations all may have characteristics that suggest that they are highly networked, the role and significance of central leadership within the organizational structure cannot be dismissed. Rather than prescribing a hierarchical or networked model to these organizations, the author suggests an alternative model that may provide insight into criminal organizational structure. Borrowing terminology from the corporate sector, drug cartels and terrorist organizations may operate as holacratic organizations. This organizational structure, as described by Robertson (the individual who coined the organizational structure), is an organizational structure that exist in "a framework of rules and free actors within that framework are able to go do whatever makes sense to them to do their work."[62] If applied to illegal covert organizations, cells have the autonomy to make their own decisions based on the function they serve; however, they still remain committed to the organization's direction, identity, and leadership. By these terms, the attributes of a network and hierarchy are apparent.

In conclusion, the organizational structure of Mexican drug cartels and Islamic Transnational Terrorist Organizations remain contentious; however, they are highly relevant to explain where decision-making authority resides. By understanding where decision-making authority resides a better understanding of a decision to cooperate between the two groups could emerge.

6. The Cooperative Relationship and the Pros and Cons of Cooperating

Before proceeding to analyze whether any conditions could create operational cooperation between transnational Islamic terrorist organizations such as AQ or ISIS and Mexican drug cartels, the parameters of criminal cooperation must be established. Yet, this task is inherently difficult due to definitions on cooperation within literature typically

[61] David Agren, "Mexico after El Chapo: New Generation Fights for Control of the Cartel," *The Guardian*, May 5, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/el-chapo-sinaloa-drug-cartel-mexico

[62] Jacob Morgan, "The 5 Types of Organizational Structures: Part 5, Holacratic Organizations," *Forbes*, July 20, 2015, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2015/07/20/the-5-types-of-organizational-structures-part-5-holacratic-organizations/#7632e77d48a2; Brian J. Robertson, interview by Jacob Morgan, *Forbes*, podcast audio, June 18, 2015, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2015/06/18/everything-you-have-ever-wanted-to-know-about-holacracy-explained-by-the-guy-who-created-it/#366aeff029b8.

focusing on state-to-state opposed to sub-state organizations. Recognizing the difficulty of the task, and by drawing from international relations definitions on cooperation (provided by Waltz and Holsti et al.), Bacon provides a succinct and manageable definition to establish what cooperation is and is not. As defined by Bacon, terrorist inter-group cooperation should be considered "as formal or informal relationships of security cooperation among two or more terrorist groups involving some degree of ongoing coordination or consultation in the future."[63] While Bacon focuses on security cooperation, and the author has focused on mobilization, continued mobilization represents a critical component of security cooperation. Moghadam provides even more granularity on the different forms of alliances (a term in which Bacon and Moghadam both use interchangeably with cooperation) stating that alliances can be categorized in four ways and involve a spectrum of cooperation. These typologies are mergers, strategic alliances, tactical cooperation, and transactional cooperation.[64] It should also be noted that Moghadam categorizes pledges of allegiance or instances of bay'a as variations of transnational cooperation so long as they have not matured beyond a pledged relationship.[65]Additionally, regarding transactional cooperation, the relationship can be a one-time basis.[66] This deviates from Bacon's definition with regard to duration. For the purpose of this thesis, cooperation will combine the perspectives of both Bacon, Moghadam, and the author as, the knowing participation in "formal or informal relationships of security cooperation among two or more"[67] criminal organizations involving either episodic or sustained "coordination or consultation"[68] that provides mutual benefit at the organizational level. It is important to delineate that the focus of this definition, as well as the analysis included in this thesis, is at the organizational level.

[63] Tricia L. Bacon, "Strange Bedfellows or Brothers-In-Arms: Why Terrorist Groups Ally" (PhD diss, Georgetown University, 2013): 12.

[64] Assaf Moghadam, "Terrorist Affiliations in Context: A Typology of Terrorist Inter-Group Cooperation," *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 3 (March 2015): 22.

[65] Moghadam, "Terrorist Affiliations in Context," 24.

[66] Moghadam, 22.

[67] Bacon, "Strange Bedfellows or Brothers-In-Arms,"12.

[68] Bacon, 12.

Counter-arguments can always be made through cases of individual deviance from organizational preferences, but such analysis that provides insight into the likelihood of cooperative relationships must remain at the organizational level.

Accurately defining and setting parameters has important implications because of the possibility of individuals interpreting and referring to a relationship as cooperation when it is not. As an example, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has provided protection to cocaine shipments originating in Latin America that have been destined for Europe, some may classify this as cooperation, whereas others may just simply consider this as extortion,[69] and others may classify it as harmony where "a group's policies and actions automatically facilitate the other's goals."[70] In this particular case, using the definition for cooperation proposed by the author, the relationship is classified as cooperative. A relationship exists, and the outcome is mutually beneficial and results in greater mobilization for both organizations. Extortion suggests only a single party benefiting; however, AQIM gains financially and drug distributors gain market access, thereby making the relationship cooperative.

7. Pros and Cons of Cooperation by Criminal Organizations

On the surface, terrorist and drug related organized crime appear to have a lot in common. First, both operate in a covert manner, use violence as a means to achieve their end states, want and need access to money, and in some form or fashion, engage in smuggling operations.[71] Second, both organizations have a transnational component, which presents a complex landscape that criminal or terrorist organizations cannot navigate without some level of support and facilitation from external individuals or organizations.[72] Third, in addition to the increased benefits in mobilizing resources, cooperative

[69] Phillip Williams, "Organized Crime and Terrorism," *Latin American and Caribbean Center, School of International and Public Affairs*, no. 2 (2014): 4, https://lacc.fiu.edu/research/publications/working-paper-2-williams.pdf.

[70] Bacon, "Strange Bedfellows or Brothers-In-Arms," 13.

[71] Central Intelligence Agency, *White Paper on Insurgent/Terrorist Involvement in International Drug Trade* (January 3, 1986): 3. https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP87M00539R000200190001-6.pdf.

[72] Farah, "Fixers, Super Fixers and Shadow Facilitators," 1.

relationships can be formed around a real or perceived threat of a common enemy.[73] Fourth, if the organizations share an ideology, the smaller group of the two that is cooperating can adopt the "brand" of the larger organization to assist in recruitment.[74] Fifth, cooperative relationships can increase organizational learning.[75] Lastly, research by Phillips suggests that cooperative relationships have positive impacts on creating longevity for terrorist organizations.[76] Of course, what drives cooperation varies greatly from organization to organization; however, Kanter in discussing alliances with the corporate sector sums up the critical components of a cooperative relationship in that: (a) they must include benefit to both parties, (b) create new value, and (c) require interpersonal connections.[77] The benefit of cooperative relationships between AQ or ISIS and Mexican Cartels seems to be readily apparent, yet among other things mentioned above, such as how the organization incentivizes, the issue of trust is a critical component in making the relationship work. Moghadam in describing the spectrum of cooperative relationships between terrorist organizations references the role of trust. High-end cooperation requires a high level of trust; low-end cooperation requires lower levels of trust.[78] Regardless of the level of cooperation, some level of trust must exist and this presents a significant divergence in a relationship between the two enterprises. Williams sums it up best with this:

> Criminals are generally pragmatic, risk averse, business oriented, and concerned about feeding illicit markets and deriving the profits therefrom. They do not want to be involved in anything that might disrupt their market. This logic might be particularly compelling for Latin American drug trafficking organizations. For their part, terrorists likely have serious reservations about cooperation with criminals, who are greedy, nonbelievers, overly pragmatic and excessively preoccupied with money. Moreover, for terrorists, criminals who do not share their political

[73] Bacon, "Strange Bedfellows or Brothers-In-Arms, 27.

[74] Moghadam, "Terrorist Affiliations in Context," 23.

[75] Moghadam, 23.

[76] Brian J. Phillips, "Terrorist Group Cooperation and Longevity," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (June 2014): 336, doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12073.

[77] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances," in *Harvard Business Review on Strategic Alliances*, ed. *Harvard Business Review* (Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 100.

[78] Moghadam, "Terrorist Affiliations in Context."

convictions are inherently unreliable partners who might betray or exploit them.[79]

The implications of lacking trust are significant and business literature posits that mistrust makes successful cooperation harder to obtain as well as the fact that because the organizations are different, the outsiders become highly suspect which, in turn, creates more distrust.[80] One of the most effective ways to overcome mistrust or ensure cooperation is through effective communication; however, given the illicit nature of the drug and terror business, this presents a problem.[81] With greater communication comes greater exposure to targeting by security forces. As is the case, drug cartels and terrorist organizations prefer to communicate through couriers[82] which time lapse and the tyranny of distance degrade effectiveness. This dilemma is further exacerbated by some literature supporting that while drug cartels are for profit organizations, they are sometimes willing to place a premium on security over efficiency in decision-making processes.[83] These factors seem to support research by Karmon that identifies geographic proximity as a key variable in determining the likelihood of success for a cooperative relationship between covert organizations.[84] Unfortunately for them, Mexican drug cartels and ISIS or AQ do not currently share core geographic areas as organizational safe havens. Given the realities of the environment that cartels and terror organizations operate in, what makes cooperation work, and the benefits and shortfalls of cooperative relationships, assessing the potential relationship between the two must be placed in the context of risk versus reward. To achieve cooperation, the value of the reward must be substantial enough to overcome the organizational differences and nature of cooperation.

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[79] Williams, "Organized Crime and Terrorism," 6.

[80] Kanter, "Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances," 117.

[81] Moghadam, "Terrorist Affiliations in Context," 23.

[82] Michael Vigil, "The Structure and Psychology of Drug Cartels," The Cipher Brief, June 15, 2016, https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column/expert-view/the-structure-and-psychology-of-drug-cartels.

[83] Benson and Decker, "The Organizational Structure of International Drug Smuggling," 132.

[84] Ely Karmon, Coalitions between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalist, and Islamist (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2005): 30.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The above literature review has established that transnational Islamic terrorist organizations, particularly AQ or ISIS and Mexican drug cartels, have some commonalities in their illicit nature; however, their organizational identities placed in the context of making cooperative relationships work vary greatly. If trust is one of the major determining factors, these differences will greatly impede their ability to cooperate. As such, the author suggests the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 1, The organizational identity factors of: strategy, ideology, and group unity (centered around trust), between AQ or ISIS and Mexican drug cartels impede the likelihood of operational cooperation between the groups.

While the organizational identities of these Islamic terrorist organizations and Mexican drug cartels, appear to be similar in nature, showing characteristics that are both networked and hierarchical; both organizational structures rely on some level of central authority to govern organizational behavior and direction. As a result of this, the preference of the leadership driven decision making in organizational goals and objectives appear to be another source of divergence for cooperation between the two groups. In this context, the following hypothesis is suggested:

> Hypothesis 2: Organizational structure decreases the likelihood of operational cooperation between the groups.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

Answering this question presents difficulty for several reasons:(a) limited material available on the future intentions of Mexican drug cartels, AQ, and ISIS, (b) minimal documented cases of cooperation, (c) inaccuracy or manipulation of available information by mainstream media or special interest groups for the advancement of organizational or

party agendas and lastly[85] (d) primary source research that draws from the cyber profiles of terrorist organizations presents difficulty in protecting the author's computer from attribution and potential malware. Given these limitations, the research of this project will be done through a historical design with the intent to "collect, verify, and synthesize evidence from the past to establish facts that defend or refute"[86] my hypotheses. Given that this topic is a contemporary issue and initial research suggests that both Mexican drug cartels and transnational Islamic terrorist groups are highly adaptive, I have taken liberties in defining history in which the most recent and available contemporary history on structural characteristics, goals, and behaviors of the groups will be utilized for supporting or refuting my argument. I recognize the limitations of this thesis, most notably with regard to a paucity of contemporary empirical evidence to support or deny the hypothesis presented; in many ways, this thesis explores potential cooperative scenarios based on subjective but supported by material on the nature of Mexican drug cartels and Islamic transnational terrorist organizations. Yet, by maintaining a structured approach that focuses on the known identities of the organizations, void of speculation or emotion, logical conclusions can be made regarding the potential for cooperation between these organizations.

In addition to this design, I will focus on the likelihood for cooperative relations in regard to strategy, ideology, trust, and structure, which together is defined by me as group identity that feeds continuous mobilization of resources. Alternative motivations for cooperative relationships that have been suggested by other authors such as shared

[85] As an example, multiple news agencies reported that leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman had emailed the leader of Islamic State of Iraq, Abu-Bakr Al-Baghdadi and had established an adversarial relationship which was later reported as being a product of fake news; Laura Italiano, "El Chapo Tells ISIS His Men Will Destroy Them," *New York Post*, December 10, 2015, http://nypost.com/2015/12/10/el-chapo-tells-isis-his-men-will-destroy-them/. ; Meg Wagner and Laurie Hanna, "Blogger's Tall Tale About Mexican Drug Lord El Chapo's War on ISIS Is a Hoax: 'We Just Thought It Would Be Funny,'" *Daily News*, December 11, 2015, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/mexican-drug-lord-el-chapo-threatens-islamic-state-article-1.2462472; Adam Taylor, "How A Hoax Story About Mexican Drug Lord El Chapo Threatening The Islamic State Took Over The Internet," *The Washington Post*, December 11, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/12/11/how-a-hoax-story-about-mexican-drug-lord-el-chapo-threatening-the-islamic-state-took-over-the-Internet/?utm_term=.321e3381158e.

[86] "Research Methods in Social Sciences," Lynn University Library, accessed September 5, 2017 http://lynn-library.libguides.com/c.php?g=549455&p=3771806.

enemies, or a permissive security environment will not be addressed within this thesis.[87] While issues of shared enemies or a permissive security environment may be identified within the analysis portion of the thesis, these factors will be considered as secondary factors to cooperation.

To achieve the goals of this thesis, the author employs stakeholder analysis and theoretical scenarios of cooperative relationships to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that affect both organizations. This process of analysis fits this thesis for the following reasons. First, as established in the literature review, there is value in looking at Mexican drug cartels, AQ and ISIS through business model lenses. Stakeholder analysis places the historical approach of the research method in proper context to draw more definitive conclusions that have been void to date. Additionally, stakeholder analysis is a common tool used in the corporate sector for determining future decisions of organizations; as such, it is a logical fit.

I hope that this thesis will inform policy makers to better develop border security strategies that include political signaling to Mexican drug cartels and broader Mexican/U.S. border security concerns. Additionally, this thesis may provide intelligence and security analysts a baseline for future analysis as these threat organizations evolve. Lastly, by opening the discussion of this topic through subjective yet scholarly work, I hope to cultivate new thinking and promote further exploration on classified domains on this topic of national security concern.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis provides the following: (a) the establishment of AQ and ISIS and Mexican drug cartels as rational actors in the context of their individual group identities. This topic has been historically controversial and debated; however, recent scholarly research supports the argument that both groups apply calculation and deliberate action in

[87] Bacon, "Strange Bedfellows or Brothers-In-Arms," 26; Imtiaz Hussain, "Mexico," in *PSI Handbook of Global Security and Intelligence: National Approaches, Volume 1, The Americas and Asia* ed. Stuart Farson et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 76.

their decision making.[88] With an understanding and acceptance that both groups are rational in decision-making, this thesis then explores (b) what issues regarding organizational identities must be resolved between Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS to achieve a cooperative relationship between groups while still maintaining operational momentum. Upon establishing what impediments the groups must contend with, (c) Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS will be compared and contrasted along their identities, highlighting their commonalities and differences in the context of forming cooperative relationships. Once this comparison of identities has been firmly established, the thesis concludes with (d) assessing the likelihood of cooperative relationships based on the group identities in the form of stakeholder analysis.

Rodrigo, Canales, "The Deadly Genius of Drug Cartels." Filmed October 2013 in New York, NY. TED video, 17:53. https://www.ted.com/talks/rodrigo_canales_the_deadly_genius_of_drug_cartels.; Rory Smith, "How Drug Cartels Operate Like Silicon Valley Startups," Motherboard, September 16, 2016, https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/9a3z4a/how-drug-cartels-operate-like-silicon-valley-startups. ; Ligon, et al., The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles; Rodrigo Nieto-Gomez, "The Geopolitics of Clandestine Innovation in The Drug Business," Medium, August 17, 2013, https://medium.com/@rodrigonieto/the-geopolitics-of-clandestine-innovation-in-the-drug-business-a07efe494035.

II. THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF THE UNITED STATES

A. INTRODUCTION

As demonstrated in Chapter one, organizational cooperation between Mexican drug cartels and al Qaeda or ISIS has become a debated topic within the United States. Broadly and most often, the issue of cooperation between ISIS or AQ and a Mexican drug cartel focus on the potential for the terrorist organizations to capitalize on the porous nature of the nearly 2,000 mile border between Mexico and the United States by smuggling operatives into the United States from the south. Despite these concerns, as of August 16, 2017, of the 114 individuals charged in the United States for an association with the Islamic State, only 14 have been from states that share a physical border with Mexico.[89] Additionally, the summaries of accusations associated with their activities, provided by *The Washington Post* provide zero references to Mexico playing a role in the travel, plots, or activities of the suspected/convicted terrorist.[90] Though empirical evidence suggests that cartel facilitated border crossing has not yet occurred, this speculation is not without basis. According to an undisclosed U.S. government official, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Osama Bin Laden, while alive, expressed "ongoing interest to enter the United States over land borders with Mexico and Canada."[91] While intent by Bin Laden may have existed; again, no domestic attacks on the United States have been tied to a border penetration from Mexico.

Given this reality, looking at how the United States fits within the strategic context of ISIS, AQ, and Mexican drug cartels may provide some insight as to why a cooperative relationship in terrorist related human smuggling operations has not yet occurred, and why a cooperation relationship of this nature is difficult to achieve for the groups. Chapter I has

[89] "The Islamic State's Suspected Inroads into America," *The Washington Post*, last modified March 12, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/isis-suspects/.

[90] "The Islamic State's Suspected Inroads into America."

[91] Brian Bennett, "Bin Laden Apparently Sought Operative with Valid Mexican Passport," *Los Angeles Times, World Now: News from around the World (blog)*, May 2, 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/05/papers-bin-laden-sought-operative-to-cross-into-us-from-mexico.html.

argued that terrorist organizations and cartels alike mirror business organizations. Therefore, before proceeding, it is worth gaining an understanding of how an organization's strategic outlook contributes to overarching activities, behaviors and how strategy effects the likelihood of creating a cooperative relationship.

Organizational strategy can be defined as the summary of "actions you intend to take in order to achieve your long-term business goals."[92] In the case of cartels, the long-term goals center along profit maximization, for AQ and ISIS, as with all terrorism, it is effecting political change. Strategy plays an important role in that the pillars of corporate success, "the best product, services, goals, and management teams are of little use without a corporate strategy."[93]Additionally, strategy helps to establish direction and priorities, align members, and clarify decision-making.[94] In a reflection of the value of strategy to a corporation and quoting Roman philosophy, "if a man does not know what port he is steering for, no wind is favorable."[95] In this context of both history, business, and clandestine groups, having a strategy for the organization represents a cornerstone of continued mobilization and pursuit of objectives. Lastly, business literature suggests that when the strategic objectives of cooperating groups closely align, this incentivizes groups to make the relationship work.[96]

With these key concepts on the value of strategy both within an organization as well as between cooperating groups, the following sections argues that if ISIS or al Qaeda and a Mexican drug cartel were to cooperate, this relationship would represent a significant divergence in the organizational strategies regarding the United States for both groups. As such, significant departures from normative behaviors would be required to achieve cooperation. Additionally, as with the entire body of this thesis, the unit of analysis for this

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[92] "What Is an Organizational Strategy and Why Is It Important," OPSTART, August 14, 2017, https://www.opstart.ca/organizational-strategy-important/.

[93] Andrew Latham, "The Strategic Importance of an Organization's Corporate Strategy," *Chron*, accessed April 2, 2018, http://smallbusiness.chron.com/strategic-importance-organizations-corporate-strategy-12246.html.

[94] OPSTART, "What Is an Organizational Strategy and Why Is It Important."

[95] Latham, "The Strategic Importance of an Organization's Corporate Strategy."

[96] Kanter, "Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances," 127.

argument lies at the organizational level. Counter arguments can always be made at the individual actor level; however, to achieve the goals of the chapter, a broader organizational context must be maintained. Lastly, the author does not attempt to predict which side would provide concessions in their group's strategies to achieve cooperation; rather, the intent is to highlight that if cooperation between the two groups were achieved, at least one group would have to significantly depart from its normative behaviors.

B. HOW THE UNITED STATES FITS INTO ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES—A CLEAR DIVIDE

For a Mexican drug cartel and ISIS or al Qaeda to cooperate, the very different role that the United States plays within their organizational strategies would have to be resolved. For a Mexican drug cartel, the United States represents a 19–29 billion-dollar market place,[97] supported by 9.4% of the population (24.6 million people) who are illicit drug users.[98] Additionally, because the drug money must exit the United States, cartels have integrated legal and conventional business into their money laundering operations. As an example, in 2015, the U.S. government seized 140 million dollars in cash and assets associated with cartel money laundering within Los Angeles' Fashion district – money that was destined to return to Mexico's Sinaloa and Knights Templar Cartels.[99] Additionally, the Chicago Crime Commission noted that "over 90% of the marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and other synthetic drugs that are being sold on the streets…come from the Sinaloa Cartel."[100] Lastly, according to a former DEA agent, who participated in over 13 years of counter-drug operations in Mexico, Michael Vigil, the Sinaloa Cartel alone

[97] Grayling G. Williams and John Morton, "Joint Message from Assistant Secretary John Morton, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Director Grayling G. Williams, DGS Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement," (official memorandum, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, undated), https://www.ice.gov/doclib/cornerstone/pdf/cps-study.pdf.

[98] "Drugfacts, Illicit Drug Use," National Institute on Drug Abuse, June 2015, https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/nationwide-trends.

[99] Deborah Belgum, "Investigators Raise Tally to $140 Million in Fashion District Cartel Money-Laundering Scheme," *California Apparel News*, April 30, 2015, https://www.apparelnews.net/news/2015/apr/30/investigators-raise-tally-140-million-fashion-dist/.

[100] "Drug Lord the Legend of Shorty Full Movie," YouTube video, 4:30, posted by Hannah Abbott, October 31, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nPtgPDiu3k.

operates in over 4,000 U.S. cities.[101] From a financial aspect, especially for drug cartels who are trying to maximize their profits, the United States is an obvious linchpin in their strategy.

The value that the United States has to the Mexican drug cartels exceeds financial benefits and includes serving as a safe haven. As an example of this, former leader of the drug cartel Los Zetas, Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, prior to his death, had been reported as using the United States as a safe haven to increase his security when pressure in Mexico became too high.[102] In a similar fashion in 2011, the now imprisoned leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán's wife, Emma Coronel gave birth to twin girls in Los Angeles County.[103] As a result of protections under the 14th Amendment and her status as a U.S. citizen, the children are now United States' citizens as well.[104] Additionally, much like the Sinaloa Cartel, the Los Zetas are known to maintain familial ties within the United States to create safe havens and increase its distribution networks to the U.S. market.[105]

While the above examples provide some context on the value that the United States plays within the strategies of the Cartels, a look at comparative murder rates of the adjacent U.S. and Mexican cities provides even stronger evidence that cartels value keeping the border with the United States relatively peaceful. In doing so, a logical conclusion is that their strategy includes an attempt to not increase pressure from the U.S. government on Cartels and their border operations. By comparison in 2016, Juarez Mexico experienced 46.3 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, whereas, just across the border in El Paso the

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[101] "Former U.S. DEA Michael Vigil on the US-Mexico Drug War," YouTube video, 4:49, posted by CGTN America, January 28, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3jH3nMs5tM.

[102] "Los Zetas – Drug Cartel – Full Documentary," YouTube video, 37:44, posted by Hots Robb, June 22, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9e06Cfw_6U.

[103] Andrew Oreilly, "Wife of Mexican Drug Lord 'El Chapo' Guzman Gives Birth in U.S.," *LAND: Latin America News Dispatch*, September 27, 2011, http://latindispatch.com/2011/09/27/wife-of-mexican-drug-lord-el-chapo-guzman-gives-birth-in-u-s/.

[104] Katie McHugh, "Mexican Drug Lord 'El Chapo' Ordered Wife to Give Birth to Anchor Babies in California," *Breitbart News*, July 13, 2015, http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2015/07/13/mexican-drug-lord-el-chapo-ordered-wife-to-give-birth-to-anchor-babies-in-california/.

[105] Lisa J. Campbell, "Los Zetas: Operational Assessment," in *Narcos over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries*, ed. Robert J. Bunker (New York: Routledge, 2011), 62.

murder rate was 17 per 100,000 inhabitants.[106] Similarly, according to data from 2012, the murder rate in Laredo Texas was 36 times lower than the adjacent city of Nuevo Laredo.[107] These statistics lead to the conclusion that, at least for the border region of the United States, cartels weigh their actions so as not to create second or third order effects on their business model.

By comparison, ISIS and al Qaeda view the United States from a different lens than the cartels. From a strategic perspective, both groups view the United States and its people as the enemy and a target. As such, for ISIS or al Qaeda, tranquility in the United States has no value to their strategies or ideologies. Al Qaeda's intent to target the United States is apparent in an undated letter to the American people that was acquired during the raid of Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The letter states, "The United States shall pay for its arrogance with the blood of Christians and their funds."[108] The continued attempts by al Qaeda post September 11, 2001, to target the United States adds further credibility to it being a strategic objective of the organization.

ISIS differs from al Qaeda in the precedence it places on attacking the United States. For ISIS, the establishment and maintenance of the Islamic State, as their name suggests, is of the highest strategic importance.[109] Organizationally, ISIS desires to live by Sharia Law, to do so, the state requires a caliph, physical territory to enforce Sharia Law.[110] Additionally, territory provides the caliph a physical domain to establish a total society and a legitimization of authority.[111] Simply, if ISIS "loses its grip on its territory in Syria and

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[106] "Crime Rate in El Paso, Texas (TX): Murders, Rapes, Robberies, Assaults, Burglaries, Thefts, Auto Thefts, Arson, Law Enforcement Employees, Police Officers, Crime Map," City-Data.com, accessed April 2, 2018, www.city-data.com/crime/crime-El-Paso-Texas.html; "The Most Dangerous Cities in the World," World Facts, accessed April 2, 2018, http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/most-dangerous-cities-in-the-world.html.

[107] Steven Dudley, "Two Reasons Why Laredo Has Less Homicides than Nuevo Laredo," The Wilson Center, accessed April 10, 2018, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Laredo_vs_Nuevo_Laredo_Dudley.pdf.

[108] "Bin Laden's Bookshelf," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, accessed April 5, 2017,https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/To%20the%20American%20people.pdf.

[109] Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," 3.

[110] Wood, 16, 19.

[111] Wood, 13, 16.

Iraq, it will cease to be a caliphate."[112] As such, the targeting of the United States is not an integral component of its ideology or grand strategy of establishing an Islamic State; however, the disruption of the United States can be considered an ancillary objective – perhaps considered as a projection of power and a tool to mobilize resources. A recent ISIS propaganda video from August 2017, shows a young boy directly addressing President Donald Trump stating that ISIS's battle, "'is not gonna end in Raqqa or Mosul' but rather 'in your lands.'"[113] Adding further credibility to where the priorities of ISIS reside, are the facts that followers of ISIS have been noted as burning their passports upon arriving in Syria; an action that does not suggest an intent to return to the Western countries for future attacks.[114] Simply, the United States is not entirely absent from its strategy, it is just not the top priority.

The role that the United States plays within the strategies of al Qaeda and ISIS vary greatly; however, both organizations, albeit different, see some value in disrupting or portraying the United States as the enemy. In contrast, Mexican drug cartels appear to prefer to keep the violence within the United States at minimal levels so that it can be maintained as a sanctuary and open market.

C. CONDITIONS AND CONCESSIONS FOR COOPERATION UNLIKELY

Other organizational perspectives and environmental conditions can certainly be considered in determining the likelihood of cooperation between a Mexican drug cartel and ISIS or al Qaeda (topics and factors that will be discussed in subsequent sections of this thesis). However, when looking exclusively at how each organization views the United States, significant hurdles would need to be overcome for cooperation to occur. First, in deciding to cooperate or not, if found out, it is fair to assume that the response of the U.S. government would be to increase pressure on both organizations and particularly along the

[112] Wood, 29.

[113] Tucker Reals, "ISIS Uses Boy 'from America' to Issue New Threat," CBS News, last modified August 24, 2017, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-purported-american-boy-in-raqqa-video-threat-us-donald-trump/.

[114] Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," 31.

United States' Southwest border. In turn, this would threaten the supply chains, market, and safe haven that the United States provides to cartels.

D. SCENARIO 1: ISIS OR AQ KEEPS THE UNITED STATES WITHIN ITS STRATEGY

Because money rather than ideology is the prime motivator of drug cartels as opposed to terrorist organizations, the increased risk to cartels would have to be offset with enough capital to make the cooperation beneficial. How much money would be required is nearly impossible to calculate. However, if the United States represents 19–29 billion dollars of revenue annually for the cartels, and if this revenue is divided equally among the seven major cartels of Mexico,[115] then at a conservative estimate each cartel gains 2.7 billion dollars from the United States annually. If this number is adjusted for just the three dominant cartels operating within the United States (Sinaloa, Gulf, and Juarez Cartel) then the estimate of annual revenue gained from the United States conservatively increases to 6.3 billion dollars. An unlikely scenario, and setting aside the intangible benefit of the U.S being a safe haven, unless the terrorist organization could convince cartels to deviate from their profit motivated mindset, the terrorist organization would have to bring a significant amount of money to the table for them to jeopardize what the United States represents to them. Provided that cartels did not change their strategic outlook on the United States, the amount of money that would entice a cooperative relationship to occur between the groups may be reduced if the shadow were long enough: making a cooperative relationship sustained as opposed to a single occurrence. The problem with this however is it would represent a significance hedge on behalf of the cartels that could jeopardize their long-term and largest market—The United States.

[115] Williams and Morton, "Joint Message from Assistant Secretary John Morton, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Director Grayling G. Williams, DGS Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement"; "Figure 2. Areas of Influence of Major Mexican TCOs," Drug Enforcement Agency, accessed April 5, 2018, http://www.businessinsider.com/dea-maps-of-mexican-cartels-in-the-us-2016-12. We know that each cartel does not receive an equal amount of drug proceeds from the United States; however, to create a conservative estimate the annual proceeds are divided equally amongst dominant Mexican drug cartels as reported by the DEA in 2015.

E. SCENARIO 2: ISIS OR AQ REMOVES THE U.S. FROM ITS STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

To reduce risk to the relationship, perhaps cooperation could occur between Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS if the terrorist organizations publicly negated their interest in targeting the United States as part of negotiating the relationship. However, as outlined above, if the relationship were with al Qaeda, this would represent a significant divergence from their strategic narrative and diminish its global image. This is a very real threat to AQ given that it has experienced a loss of global support over changes in strategies that resulted in the fracturing of Al Qaeda in Iraq and the spinning off of ISIS as an organization. If the relationship were between ISIS and the cartel, this would have a similar effect, but given its focus on establishing an Islamic State, conceptually a narrative could be formed to support this.

If this were the case, it is unclear what could entice the cooperative relationship in the first place. For the terrorist, money or resources flowing from the cartels to the terrorist organizations would be one answer; however, once again this amount of resources would have to be enough to overcome the benefits that including the United States as a target provides to the mobilization of resources already. For ISIS, this appears to be an easier hurdle to overcome as opposed to al Qaeda.

ISIS's monthly revenue in 2015 was believed to be $81 million per month and as of June 2017 is believed to be around $16 million a month.[116] Multiplying this number by 12 gives a current annual income of $192 million. By comparison, al Qaeda's annual budget, as of 2010, has been estimated at between $30–$50 million.[117] ISIS's funding predominately is generates through the "taxation of the people under its control,

[116] David Francis, "Islamic State Revenues down 80 Percent from 2015," *Foreign Policy*, June 29, 2017, foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/29/islamic-state-revenues-down-80-percent-from-2015/.

[117] Jimmy Gurulé, *Unfunding Terror: The Legal Response to the Financing of Global Terrorism* (Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010), 25.

confiscation of goods, oil smuggling and production, and trade in illegal antiquities."[118] Whereas al Qaeda funding is heavily reliant on private donation from the Gulf States.[119]

These funding lines and numbers provide some insight for both catalysts for cooperation and blocks. First, ISIS is suffering from a loss of revenue and does not appear to be reliant on a strategic narrative of the targeting of the west for revenue mobilization—at least not at this time. Even though, ISIS may be need of expanding its funding sources, its economic goals are to be "devoid of outside influence, in order to protect the movements credibility, legitimacy, and authority."[120] With this in mind, in theory, ISIS may be able to cooperate with a cartel as well as have the financial need to cooperate, but from the economic model employed by ISIS does not suggest a fit in establishing cooperative relationships with outside groups – let alone a Mexican drug cartel.

Al Qaeda on the other hand, because its reliance on private donations for funding is not in a position to comprise its anti-American strategic narrative. Additionally, from the perspective of a strategic outlook on the United States, in looking at annual incomes, it appears as though it could potentially cost the Cartels less money to remove the United States from the ISIS strategy than it would for ISIS to pay off the cartels to keep it on the table. Lastly, without adjustment for other benefits, unless the relationship were indefinite and the amount of money the cartels paid to al Qaeda exceeded what they received from private donations – al Qaeda cannot remove the intent to target the United States from its strategic narrative. Further compounding the problem is trying to determine what would bring the cartels to seek this type of cooperative relationship in the first place. For the Cartels, perhaps the promise of opening new markets, but the cartels have already deeply penetrated the global markets nor do cartels need to rely on terrorist organizations to open up new markets. To date without the support of AQ or ISIS, the Sinaola Cartel alone has

[118] Francis, "Islamic State Revenues down 80 Percent from 2015."

[119] United Kingdom, HM Treasury, Home Office, *UK National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing* (United Kingdom: HM Treasury, 2015). https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/468210/UK_NRA_October_2015_final_web.pdf.

[120] Craig Whiteside, "New Masters of Revolutionary Warfare: The Islamic State Movement (2002-2016)" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 4 (August 2016): 10.

penetrated market places in 40 different countries.[121] Yet, the initial investment on behalf of the cartels, given the annual budgets of the terrorist organizations are relatively low compared to the cartel revenue, the risk of investment may generate enough return to entice a cartel to entertain a relationship.

Even though this may appear to be a better deal for the cartels, perhaps it is not. First, regardless of where or to what extent the cooperative relationship occurred, if found out, state retaliations would occur on the Southwest border and within the United States: having an effect on their existing U.S. markets. Considering that the cartels are deliberate in maintaining a level of tranquility within the United States this would make cooperation counter to cartel strategy. Second, if terrorist groups shifted focus away from the United States, this may represent more available resources to fight America's war on drugs. Under this scenario, al Qaeda or ISIS loses portions of its strategic narrative, and the cartel again places itself in a compromising position. This scenario represents an abandonment of strategies for al Qaeda or ISIS (more so for al Qaeda than ISIS) and risk to the cartels. Thus, creating a losing scenario for both the terrorist group and the cartel—which makes its probability of occurring that much further from reality.

F. CONCLUSION

Even among likeminded people, cooperation in any environment is incredibly difficult to accomplish. This problem is even more difficult to achieve when the strategic outlook of two organizations attempting to cooperate vary significantly. As shown in the above background information, and strategy regarding the United States Mexican drug cartels and ISIS or al Qaeda do not see eye to eye making the issue of U.S. strategy nearly irreconcilable. This section looks exclusively at the issue of the role that the United States plays within the strategies of the organization. Admittedly, it is an oversimplification of a scenario with far more variables (to be discussed in additional sections of this thesis). However, because an organizational strategy is so paramount, it does provide a foundational baseline. Additional analysis in the subsequent sections of this thesis provides

[121] CGTN America, "Former U.S. DEA Michael Vigil on the US-Mexico Drug War," 4:49.

a comprehensive perspective of the potential for a cooperative relationship between the groups. Issues regarding ideology, trust, and organizational structure which are discussed add depth to comprehending the likelihood of this cooperative relationship occurring. However, from a single lens of organizational strategies, it can be conclusively stated that significant compromise would be required on the role that the United States plays within the organizational strategies of cartels and ISIS or AQ to achieve cooperation – compromises that neither cartels nor ISIS or al Qaeda are in a position to make.

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III. ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY: VITAL BUT A BARRIER TO COOPERATION

A. INTRODUCTION

According to *Forbes Magazine*, "trust is the core foundation of successful companies."[122] For terrorist organizations and drug cartels alike, creating trust within the organization is imperative given the illicit nature of their activities. Cartels and terrorist groups alike must be able to trust its members because of the adverse consequences that defection at the individual level may have on the organization as a whole. Additionally, because terrorist organizations and cartels operate within an illegal realm they are unable to rely on state or institutional support in the enforcement of policies, agreements, or acceptable practices; increasing the value that trust has within the organization. To establish trust within a cartel or terrorist group by creating a shared identity the organization increases the level of trust between members. As such, these organizations rely on practices that create a shared organizational identity that in turn generates the critical element of trust for the illicit organization.

As one example of how important ensuring trust exist within a drug Cartel, the Los Zetas have been known to publicly hang individuals and leaving behind messages to "cartel turncoats or to dealers who sell to the wrong groups."[123] Similarly, and drawing parallels with the corporate sector, Shapiro notes that terrorists face issues with creating trust within their organizations "common to more mundane organizations such as business firms."[124] The primary method of creating trust within these illicit organizations is through a process of inculcating individuals into the organization's identity. By doing so, the individuals become ingrained and often inescapably joined to the organization. The following section

[122] Christine Crandell, "What Does Trust Have to Do with Anything," *Forbes,* April 21, 2012, https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinecrandell/2012/04/21/what-does-trust-have-to-do-with-anything/#2411b0984bfd.

[123] Christopher Woody, "Cartels Are Leaving Grisly Displays as a Warning at a Major US-Mexico Border Crossing," *Business Insider*, November 4, 2016, http://www.businessinsider.com/tijuana-cartel-violence-2016-11.

[124] Shapiro, The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations, 255.

establishes that cartels, AQ and ISIS use very similar methods of indoctrinating individuals into the organization's identity to gain trust and cohesion amongst members; however, in doing so, the nature of this process is counterproductive to creating potential inter-group cooperation between cartels and AQ or ISIS.

B. MEANS OF BUILDING TRUST AND SHARED IDENTITY IN CARTELS AND TERRORIST GROUPS

One means in creating group solidarity and ultimately trust within illicit organizations is the integration of a religious component within the organization's identity. Al Qaeda, ISIS, and cartels often employ similar methods in creating trust and group identity within their organizations through the establishment of shared religiosity. In both cases, the cartels and terrorist groups present modifications to established religions in a way that fits the organization's objectives. Islamic radicalization is the process within terrorist organizations such as AQ or ISIS to accomplish these goals. For AQ or ISIS, radicalization represents a process of "internalizing a set of beliefs, a militant mindset that embraces violent jihad as the paramount test of one's conviction."[125] Cartels on the other hand, as one method of creating a shared identity, since the 1980s have created a similar effect through the establishment of *narcocultos.*[126] To substantiate the claim of similarities in how religion is used by cartels and terrorist groups alike, Mexican Police Commissioner, Facundo Rosas commented that:

> An "explosive mixture" of religion and criminal activity…[wherein] religious elements are used by criminals as a way of seeking divine or supernatural protection that will intercede with God on their behalf, and thereby expiate their sins..[in this way]...criminal organizations in Mexico are following the pattern that has been used by armed groups with political or ideological goals such as those in the Middle East.[127]

[125] Brian Michael Jenkins, *Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization Recruitment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT278-1.html: 2.

[126] Pamela L. Bunker, Lisa L. Campbell, and Robert J. Bunker, "Torture, Beheadings, and Narcocultos," in *Narcos over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries*, ed. Robert J. Bunker (New York: Routledge, 2011), 160.

[127] Bunker et al., "Torture, Beheadings, and Narcocultos,"171.

In addition to this comment, the *Huffington Post* notes that, "so just as ISIS and Al Qaeda terrorize the Middle East and beyond in the name of Islam, certain drug cartels have appropriated" the use of "folk saints."[128]

Narcocultos align with the conventional definition of a cult in which, "a group of individuals whose belief and/or practices are unorthodox or extreme in nature."[129] The role in which the *narcocultos* play within the cartels is noteworthy and spans across cartel organizations. Marijuana growers are known to petition San Judas Tadeo for prosperity.[130] The Sinaloa, Sonora, and Juarez Cartel are all know to pay respects to the unofficial Saint, Jesus Malverde (also known as the "The Mexican Robin Hood" or the "Angel of the Poor") praying him to for safe border crossings and placing his image on drug packaging.[131] Additionally, 'El Chapo' has been suspected of closing streets in the past to pray at Malvarde's gravesite.[132] Santa Muerte provides another example of the integration of religion within the narco-lifestyle. Cartel members often pray to Santa Muerte for protection prior to committing a murder, as well as for general vengeance against enemies.[133] The proliferation of the *narcocultos*, particularly those that pay homage to Santa Muerte is alarming. As noted in *Narcos over the Border*, "approximately 40% of those in Mexican jails are devotees [to Santa Muerte] with inmates exhibiting tattoos, amulets, and charms with the saint's likeness."[134]

La Familia Michoacana (La Familia) has been noted as the most extreme version of integrating religiosity within a cartel.[135] La Familia is known to employ an "Christian evangelical belief system" that "espouse fringe belief" through strict enforcement measures

[128] Andrew Chesnut, "La Tuta's Knight Templar and The Rise of Narco-Religion in Mexico," *Huffington Post the Blog* (blog), March 3, 2015, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/r-andrew-chesnut/la-tutas-knights-templar-and-the-rise-of-narco-religion-in-mexico_b_6782198.html.

[129] Bunker et al., "Torture, Beheadings, and Narcocultos," 160.

[130] Bunker et al., 161.

[131] Bunker et al., 163–164.

[132] Bunker et al., 164.

[133] Bunker et al., 165, 167.

[134] Bunker et al., 167.

[135] Bunker et al., 169.

of the Cartel's founder, Moreno 'The Craziest One' Gonzales.[136] Given the extent and focus that La Familia places on creating an identity grounded in a cult religion, it has had great success in forming organizational cohesion and trust. It has been noted by drug trafficking expert, Raul Benitez that:

> La Familia uses religion as a way of forcing cohesion among its members. They are building a new kind of disciplined army that we have never seen her before. It makes them more dangerous.[137]

As shown by Rosas, the integration of some form of religion by the cartels provides a level of justification for the illicit activities; however, simultaneously the integration of religion is an additive to the identity of the cartels—rationalizing behaviors and creating cohesion, two effects that provide contribution to intra-cartel trust.

A second method of creating trust and an inescapable relationship between cartels and their members is through training camps; participation in violent crimes which trap members within the organization, and its value system; and the targeting of impressionable youth as members. The case of Rosalio Reta and Gabriel Cardona, former hitmen for the Los Zetas, highlight the previous characteristics within the cartel recruiting and trust building process. While being interviewed, Reta commented that he was first brought into the Los Zetas at the age of 13 by two friends, at which time the Los Zetas leader, Miguel Trevino presented him with an ultimatum of murdering a person or face his own death.[138] Reta decided to kill the individual, and event that forever changed his life and a "13 year old assassin was born."[139] Cardona, experienced what appears to be a similar recruitment ultimatum when he was interrogated by Trevino while Trevino played with a hand grenade.[140] Shortly thereafter the interrogation, and impressed with Cardona's personality, Trevino assigned Cardona as a "probationary foot soldier" in a training camp in

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[136] Bunker, et al., "Torture, Beheadings, and Narcocultos," 169-170.

[137] Bunker, et al., 170.

[138] "Inside The Secret World of Teen Cartel Hit Men," YouTube video, 2:02, posted by Intidings, August 6, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVQUJC_OD-o.

[139] Intidings, "Inside the Secret World of Teen Cartel Hit Men," 2:00.

[140] Patrick Radden Keefe, "The Teen Killers of the Drug War," *The New Yorker*, September 12, 2016, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/09/12/wolf-boys-two-american-teenagers-and-mexicos-most-dangerous-drug-cartel.

Tamaulipas.[141] While attending this training camp Cardona was instructed to leave his personal belongings at home, and was given a uniform to look like the other recruits, "in a symbolic shedding of skin"[142] Additionally, training camp activities included the killing of captured rivals, to further inculcate the individuals into the organization and a "progressive exposure to violence"[143] and ultimately build bonds between the organization and the individuals.

ISIS and AQ have used similar techniques in their recruitment and training camps for the same end-state of building trust and bonds within the organization. As of 2016, ISIS has increased its recruitment and dependence on juvenile members, "known as the Cubs of the Caliphate."[144] Much like Cardona and Reta's experiences, "when the Islamic State trains the Cubs of the Caliphate, children are instructed to decapitate a doll, then to watch while a human is decapitated, then to decapitate a human themselves."[145] Furthermore, much like a cartel training camp, AQ training camps are used to bond "through shared beliefs and hardships" and gain combat and advanced training experiences.[146]

Regardless of being a cartel or a terrorist organization such as AQ or ISIS, the effect of this exposure to violence and indoctrination through training camps is the same. Without additional context, it is difficult to ascertain which groups the following quotes can be attributed to. One ISIS fighter commented on Twitter, "Cant wait for that feeling when U just killed some1."[147] In an eerily similar way, during a police interview Rosalio Reta commented that killing someone made you feel like superman.[148] The end result from the indoctrination process appears to be a mirror image between a cartel and a terrorist

[141] Keefe, "The Teen Killers of the Drug War."

[142] Keefe.

[143] Keefe.

[144] Keefe.

[145] Keefe.

[146] Jenkins, Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization Recruitment, 2.

[147] Terrence McCoy, "How ISIS and Other Jihadists Persuaded Thousands of Westerners to Fight Their War of Extremism," *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/17/how-isis-persuaded-thousands-of-westerners-to-fight-its-war-of-extremism/?utm_term=.bc9615b15b44.

[148] Intidings, "Inside the Secret World of Teen Cartel Hit Men," 3:13.

organization. Jenkin's while testifying to the Committee of Homeland Security, in reference to AQ, called this indoctrination a process of "transforming oneself into a weapon of Jihad."[149] Whereas Slater in "Wolf Boys" refers to Cardona's transformation into a cartel hitman as becoming 'a heat-seeking missile of black-market capitalism to be deployed against anyone who ran afoul of the Company.'[150]

Based on the above examples and case study, one finds little difference in the approaches that terrorist organizations and cartels use in their processes of building a group identity and trust through an indoctrination process. This similarity superficially may suggest that the commonality in indoctrination practices make the organizations more like-minded that initially expected. However, while the indoctrination practices of each group bring them closer together, the actual effect of the indoctrination process polarize cartels and groups such as ISIS or AQ, which will be discussed in the following section.

C. THE EFFECTS OF BUILDING INTER-GROUP TRUST AND A COHESIVE GROUP IDENTITY

Social science research and experimentation has shown that group identity has significant impact on relationships both internal and external to an organization. Figure 1 provides a visualization of the conclusions of Pan and Houser in that, "people often cooperate with members of their own group, and discriminate against members of other groups…and that these groups demonstrate in-group favouritism"[151] In addition to this, and experiments have shown that "hostilities towards out-groups appears to be particularly potent" and that "members of a group will choose among distributions of a resource in a way that discriminates against members of the out-group rather than simply benefitting members of the in-group"[152] While these studies admittedly apply broadly to human

[149] Jenkins, Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization Recruitment, 3.

[150] Keefe, "The Teen Killers of the Drug War."

[151] Xiaofei Sophia Pan and Daniel Houser, "Cooperation during Cultural Group Formation Promotes Trust towards Members of Out-Groups," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 280, no. 1762 (July 2013): 1, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3673051/.

[152] Mukesh Eswaran and Hugh Neary, "Identity and Terrorism," (master's thesis, Vancouver School of Economics, 2014), 10, http://thred.devecon.org/papers/2016/2016-007.pdf.

behavior, it is reasonable to believe that these same effects occur within illicit organizations especially when the specific behaviors of cartels and terror groups are analyzed.

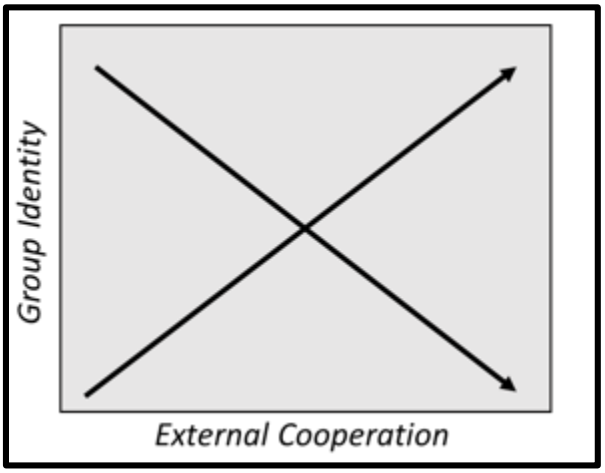

Figure 1. Effects of Group Identity on Cooperative Relationships

The purpose of indoctrination in illicit organizations (either a terrorist group or a Mexican drug cartel) is to "draw the individuals into a group dynamic"[153] and "establish a cover (closed) network right from the start and dissolve and integrate all of its supporters in this network so that they become an indispensable part of the organization."[154] To do so, the group leverages group dynamics through training to change the an individual's "ideas, senses, and attitudes"[155] towards a direction that aligns with the larger organizations identity. As such, "there is no place for individualism in an organizational group" and those who defect are assigned "humiliating adjectives such as 'fake' or 'traitor'.[156] These attributes are readily apparent in the above-mentioned cases. The way in which the Los Zetas brought Cardona and Reta into the organization, how the Los Zetas have left messages on publicly hanged individuals, and how the La Familia uses printed press in

[153] Necati Alkan and Yavuz Ozdemir, "Recruitment Methods of Terrorist Organizations," in *Organizational and Psychological Aspects of Terrorism*, ed. Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism (Turkey: NATO Public Diplomacy, 2007), 43.

[154] Alkan and Ozdemir, "Recruitment Methods of Terrorist Organizations," 43.

[155] Alkan and Ozdemir, 44.

[156] Alkan and Ozdemir, 45.

their indoctrination process all exemplify the deliberate design of the indoctrination process. The end result is the creation of "a wall between the members and the outer world through constructing a new world" and making the individual another "spoke in the organizational wheel."[157]

Throughout this entire process, the cartel and the terrorist organization alike create an environment that alters the psychological perception of its members so that they categorize people in a binary way. People are either part of the illicit organization or not through "exaggerating the differences between the in-group and the out-group."[158] While this may appear to a vast generalization on the radicalization or indoctrination process, it has been substantiated. As reported by the *Huffington Post*, Canadian Officials in the study of radicalization process have identified ten behavioral shifts that occur in people who have undergone the process of radicalization.[159] In all cases, the individuals studied showed some if not all of the behavioral changes identified and associated with the withdrawing from previous social groups with a gravitational pull towards the violent group tendencies.[160] Furthermore, Vergani and Collins note that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Mexican religious drug cartels is their recruitment strategy of creating "a strong group identity through the production of sub-cultures and countercultures that distinguish the group from the mainstream society."[161]

In sum, the effect of creating intra-group trust and a group identity appears to represent a process in which the individuals withdraws from normal societal behaviors, and place the organizations value system and identity above self-interest. To accomplish this, the illicit organization fosters distrust of outside institutions and value systems, whereby,

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[157] Alkan and Ozdemir, "Recruitment Methods of Terrorist Organizations," 48.

[158] Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *American Psychologist* (February–March 2005): 166.

[159] Colin Kenny, "10 Signs Someone Is Becoming Radicalized to Violence," *The Huffington Post, The Blog* (blog), December 22, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/colin-kenny/radicalized-violence-canada_b_6366114.html.

[160] Kenny, "10 Signs Someone Is Becoming Radicalized to Violence."

[161] Matteo Vergani and Sean Collins, "Radical Criminals in the Grey Area: A Comparative Study of Mexican Religious Drug Cartels and Australian Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 6 (February 2015): 415, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1004891.

it becomes difficult for the individual to defect from the organization and the organization strained to cooperate with others.

D. SCENARIO 3: TRUST AND IDENTITY ISSUES IN COOPERATION

Considering how much value AQ, ISIS or drug cartels place on creating intra-group trust among its members through a shared identity in a closed system, external cooperative relationships run counter to these organizations identities. Because some level of trust is required among cooperating organizations, creating a cooperative relationship for AQ, ISIS, or drug cartels would represent a paradigm shift from their modus operandi. If a cooperative relationship were to occur, both the terrorist organization and the drug cartel would have to expand their sphere of trust, which would constitute trusting individuals outside of their specific group identity – an action that runs counterproductive to the original objective of making intra-group trust and the group identity an imperative. No matter how small, in doing so they would sacrifice a portion of their particular identity obtained and fostered through its closed network. Additionally, even if creating a cooperative relationship makes economic sense, or creates greater efficiency, drug cartels are known to place a greater premium on security over pragmatic approaches (which is directly related to the issue of trust) in maximizing opportunities.[162] For these varied reasons, cooperative relationships within the world of criminality tend to exist (or are more successful) when strong "social links" (share identity) underpin the connection.[163]

With this in mind, the nature of a cooperative relationship between a cartel and a group such as AQ or ISIS would have to provide (a) large enough incentive structure for each organization to overcome the risk associated with trusting an external organization, and (b) enough benefit that the group was willing to compromise on the level of cohesion it gains through fostering skepticism of outside individuals and organizations, and the isolating its members from competing norms. Even under the above outlined conditions, if cartels decided to compromise some portion of their shared identity to achieve a

[162] Benson and Decker, "The Organizational Structure of International Drug Smuggling," 132.

[163] Lyubov Grigorova Mincheva and Ted Robert Gurr, "Crime-Terror Alliances and the State: Ethnonationalist and Islamist Challenges to Regional Security" (New York: Routledge, 2013), 11.

cooperative relationship with AQ or ISIS, this would represent the sacrificing of a key tool employed in the pursuit of its strategic imperatives of "maintaining a favorable business environment, motivate organizational members and effectively recruit new organizational members."[164] Because continuous group mobilization is required to sustain cartels and group identity and intra-group trust enable mobilization, it is reasonable to conclude that the sacrifice of group identity to achieve a level of cooperation with AQ or ISIS is low. Trusting external groups undercuts the fundamental practices that cartels and terrorist groups employ to sustain themselves.

E. CONCLUSION

The previous sections have shown that creating a group identity and trust among members in AQ, ISIS, or a Mexican drug cartel is an organizational imperative; as such, these illicit organizations approach this requirement deliberately and with care. While the exact value cannot be calculated, actions to create group identity readily emerge. When analyzing behaviors in the context of the likelihood of creating cooperative relationships between AQ or ISIS and a Mexican drug cartel, they are counter to producing cooperative relationships. This leads to the conclusion that, not only is the value of creating group identity high in illicit organizations, but the effects of this process also adversely affect a group's willingness to cooperate externally.

[164] Timothy Klein, "Drug Cartels and Business," (master's thesis, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth Texas, 2015), iii, https://repository.tcu.edu/bitstream/handle/116099117/10366/Klein_Timothy_Final_Thesis.pdf?sequence=1

IV. IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE: A HURDLE IN COOPERATION

A. INTRODUCTION

The ideological difference between Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS cannot be ignored within the discussion of the likelihood of forming a cooperative relationship. As will be discussed later in this section, cartels do not have an ideology in the same sense as terrorists; however, they still possess an ideology that is based in an economic value system of capitalism. AQ and ISIS on the other hand, center their ideology around its Islamic belief system and complementary political systems. While perfect ideological alignment, may be neither achievable nor necessary in creating a cooperative relationship, the ideological values of the AQ or ISIS remain highly relevant to their organizations. The following chapter establishes that a cooperative relationship between AQ or ISIS and a Mexican drug cartel would represent major concessions in organizational ideologies. Furthermore, given how important ideology is within terrorist organizations, these concessions would have the potential for significant adverse effects on their organization. This argument is supported by the following: (a) establish the role that ideology plays within terrorist organizations, (b) provide broad examples of how compromise in ideological values has adversely affected terror organizations throughout history, (c) compare and contrast ideological values of ISIS, AQ, and Mexican drug cartels, and then conclude with specific organizational repercussions that may result for the creation of a cooperative relationship.

B. DEFINING IDEOLOGY FOR TERRORISM—A DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP

Terrorism by definition cannot occur without a supporting ideology, but showing how terrorism relies on ideology warrants a review of the definitions of terrorism and ideology. John Horgan in *The Psychology of Terrorism* defines terrorism as "a conscious, deliberate strategic use of violence against a specific target to affect the political

process."[165] Oxford's definition of ideologies states that an ideology is "a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory or policy."[166] In both definitions, a reference to politics is present. The dependent relationship of the two words is simple. Ideology provides a political value system, or rather the ends desired for terrorist organizations. Terrorism provides the means to achieve these political ends. Without a desired policy change, violence that produces fear or terror without objectives grounded in political policy qualifies as organized crime;[167] nor does it fit within the constraints of the definition provided by Horgan. While this argument may appear to be semantics, it is far from it. Terrorists, while they most likely would not refer to themselves as terrorists, would certainly be opposed to be categorized as simple criminals. With the integration of their politically based ideology, terrorists distance themselves from criminals as well as create a narrative that legitimizes their actions.

C. IDEOLOGY AND TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

High value targeting operations have become a well-established method for states to counter terrorist organizations; however, the success of these operations greatly depends on the status of the terrorist organization's ideology. According to Michael Freeman, ideology is the articulation of the vision of a terrorist organization's leader.[168] In cases where this ideology becomes institutionalized, the role of the leader then becomes diminished, and the value of killing or capturing him thereby is weakened as well.[169]Additionally, the reward of targeting leaders who provide inspiration (a continued

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[165] John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism, Revised and Updated Second Edition*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 28.

[166] Oxford Dictionary, s.v. "Ideology," accessed November 2, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ideology.

[167] Michael Freeman, "Defining Terrorism" (presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, September 25, 2017), https://cle.nps.edu/portal/site/d8fc1855-dee8-4628-b9fe-4a5aea1de988/page/8d2bbf5d-6161-41f0-918d-8707f2975038.

[168] Michael Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, (2014): 668, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.7519.

[169] Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," 671.

articulation of the organization's ideology) and operational guidance inflicts significant damage to the group.[170] Lastly, even if a terrorist organization's leader is highly charismatic, the value of ideology cannot be dismissed. Charisma is merely a tool to help sell the leader's ideology to potential members.[171]Analysis of this thought process highlights several key points. First, the leaders of terrorist organizations use ideology as the cornerstone for their organization's narrative. Second, once the ideology becomes institutionalized, its value exceeds that of the organization's leader. Lastly, while a charismatic leader is beneficial to a terrorist organization, he still requires something to sell and that is his vision or rather his ideology.

Analysis of the role of ideology in highly networked organizations adds additional justification that the value of ideology supersedes leaders in terrorist movements. As organizations grow or become more and more networked, the direct accessibility to leaders becomes reduced.[172] Without access to leaders, the role of ideology drives the process of radicalization. As noted by Fathali Moghaddam in reference to cellular terrorist groups, it is a process of "immersion in secret, small-group activities leads to changes in perceptions among recruits: a legitimization of the terrorist organization and its goals, a belief that the ends justify the means, and a strengthening of a categorical us-versus-them view of the world."[173] What Moghaddam describes as immersion could be simply stated as the adoption of an ideology by a recruit without the presence of the organization's leader .Even further on the spectrum of decentralized terrorist organizations are "lone wolf" terrorists who resort to entirely self-radicalization processes. In a study conducted on 119 lone wolf terrorists, broader terrorist movement ideologies motivated 77% of the perpetrators.[174]

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[170] Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," 671.

[171] Freeman, 668.

[172] Freeman, 668.

[173] Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," 165.

[174] Jan Leenaars and Alastair Reed, *Understanding Lone Wolves: Towards a Theoretical Framework for Comparative Analysis* (The Hague, The Netherlands: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—The Hague, 2016), https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ICCT-Leenars-Reed-Understanding-Lone-Wolves-April-2016.pdf, 4.

These statistics show that ideology alone, even in the absence of all other potential contributing factors, can drive terrorist acts and behavior.

D. IDEOLOGY: A SIGNIFICANCE IN GROUP FRACTURING

Max Abrahms in "What Terrorists Really Want" presents an argument that the value and relevancy of terrorist group ideologies are over played because of historical examples of groups failing to agree on stable ideological principles.[175] He substantiates his argument by referring to ETA's failure to create "a consistent ideology" and Action Directe's "inability to agree on basic ideological principles."[176] Superficially, this appears to be a reasonable argument against the value of ideologies in terrorist groups; however, from a different perspective, these examples highlight how paramount ideologies actually are. Consider it in terms of politics. According to the Pew Research Center, in reference to U.S politics, "ideological polarization makes political compromise more difficult, in part because those at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum see less benefit in meeting the other side halfway."[177] In applying this idea of reaching compromise on ideological values to terrorist organizations, ideology is not a moot point to the terrorist. Rather, ideology is the most important point to the terrorist; as such, that is exactly why terrorist organizations fracture—the value of their ideological principles is so high that they cannot be set aside.

Brynjar Lia highlights the very point that cleavages exist in terrorist organizations over ideologies creates impasses that cannot be overcome, and result in organizations splitting. Specifically, Lia refers to the "clash between ideological purists and military strategists in al-Qaida"[178] with the former preferring accomplishment of the desired end states even if some concessions to ideology are made along the way. For Zarqawi, an

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[175] Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 88.

[176] Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," 87–88.

[177] "Political Polarization in the American Public: Section 4: Political Compromise and Divisive Policy Debates," The Pew Research Center—U.S. Politics & Policy, June 12, 2014, http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/section-4-political-compromise-and-divisive-policy-debates/.

[178] Brynjar Lia, "Jihadi Strategists and Doctrinarians," in *Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions within al-Qa'ida and its Periphery* ed. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (New York: United States Military Academy, 2010), 100.

ideological purist, ideological principles were so fundamental to his vision in Iraq he split from al-Qa'ida to form a new terrorist organization—the Islamic State of Iraq. The Shining Path provides another observable example of how divisive ideology can be. While in prison, the founder of the Shining Path, Abimael Guzman, advocated an ideology that was centered on peace negotiations.[179] As a result of this, and unable to reconcile ideological differences, Guzman's successor, Oscar Ramirez Durand and his supporting members split from Guzman to pursue an ideology grounded in continued violence.[180] While this section emphasizes how ideology can divide a terrorist organization, the examples still support that ideology highly matters, so much so, that it is worth dividing an organizations over.

E. IDEOLOGY: THE HANDRAIL ON THE RADICALIZATION STAIRWAY

Ideology is a critical factor in the mobilization of human resources for terrorist organizations. However, prior to proceeding, it is first important to understand the radicalization process, thereby putting the role of ideology in context. As shown on the left side of Figure 2,[181] Moghaddam posits that terrorists undergo a transformation process in which their "psychological interpretation of material conditions" becomes perceived as relative deprivation.[182] From this stage, an individual evaluates his options for improving his repressed status—when legitimate options are limited, the attraction to terrorism increases.[183] Anger over perceived deprivation and limited mobility options can then result in the "displacement of aggression."[184] The individual now possesses the perception of deprivation, limited options, and someone to blame, but still must contend with issues of morality in participating in terrorist activities. Terrorist organizations mitigate these

[179] Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and Its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," 677.

[180] Freeman, 677.

[181] Figure 2 is a visualization of concepts and ideas originating in Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and Its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)" and Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," 162–166.

[182] Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," 162.

[183] Moghaddam, 163–164.

[184] Moghaddam, 164.

concerns by fostering an alternative morality in which terrorism is not immoral; rather, the enemy is classified as being immoral.[185] The individual now views terrorism as not just an option to correct his deprivation, but also has a moral backing for it.[186] From this stage, the individual undergoes a "solidification of categorical thinking and perceived legitimacy of the terrorist organization."[187] In doing so, the in group and the out group is firmly established in the mind of the individual.[188] The last and final stage of the radicalization process is the act of terrorism itself that finds foundational justification in all of the preceding steps.[189] Figure 2 visualizes this process or it can be considered metaphorically ascending a staircase.[190]

[185] Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," 164.

[186] Moghaddam, 165.

[187] Moghaddam, 165.

[188] Moghaddam, 165.

[189] Moghaddam, 166.

[190] Moghaddam, 161.

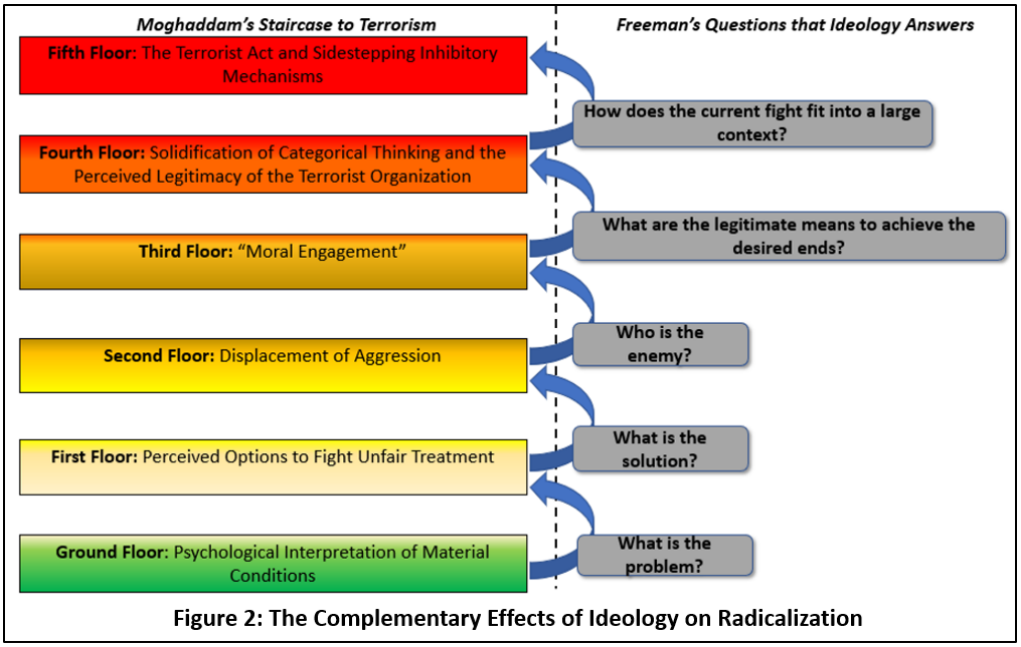

Figure 2. The Complementary Effect of Ideology on Radicalization[191]

To continue the use of metaphors, ideology should be considered the handrail on the staircase of radicalization. According to Freeman, "ideology provides answers to five essential questions: what is the problem, who is the enemy, what is the solution, what are the legitimate means to achieve the desired ends, and how does the current fight fit into a larger context."[192] The right side of Figure 2 shows these questions in a complementary way to assist in the movement from step to step. While the questions inform the process, the questions can pertain to different steps. Though the steps are linear, the relevance of the questions are fluid in application. What is key is how an individual undergoing radicalization is on a path of discovery and seeking answers. Ideology provides the answers that are required, allowing an individual to continue radicalizing. To further emphasize this point of the interrelationship of radicalization and ideology, both Freeman and Moghaddam's articles specifically call out the value of establishing an enemy. The former suggests that ideology "makes distinctions of us-versus-them," and the latter suggests that

[191] Adapted from Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," 668; Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," 162–166.

[192] Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," 668.

by the "fourth floor," an individual is well within the mindset of "us-versus-them" in his transformation into a terrorist.[193] In this example, the metaphoric ideological rail continues to guide individuals up the steps of radicalization and the codependent relationship of ideology and radicalization becomes obvious.

This section has shown at the macro-level that ideology has significant value at the organizational level of terrorist organizations. With these concepts established, the micro-level, and specific organizational values of ISIS, AQ and cartels can now be placed in a better context, for further analysis as well as how these group's organizational values directly oppose each other and may present a significant hurdle in forming a cooperative relationship.

F. SIGNIFICANT IDEOLOGICAL HURDLES TO COOPERATION

Cartels, AQ and ISIS diverge so significantly in ideological views that cooperative relationships seem highly unlikely. Notably, organizational views on innovation, normative behaviors and positional authority all represent potential conflict to achieving cooperation. The following section compares these ideological attributes showing not only how views differ, but also sometimes compete absolutely.

G. WORLD VIEWS IMPEDE COOPERATION

Cartels and AQ or ISIS' competing lenses present significant obstacles for finding commonality that could facilitate a cooperative relationship. First, unsurprisingly, Islamic terrorist organizations believe in the moral superiority of Islam.[194] As such, according to Simons, non-Muslims "can never prove ourselves superior, or even equal, unless we adopt their standards."[195] Since most cartel members are Catholic or espouse some version of *narcocultos*, AQ or ISIS see cartels as religiously inferior. Further compounding this issue, because religion is so fundamental and superior within ISIS or AQ, how pious their

[193] Michael Freeman, "A Theory of Terrorist Leadership (and its Consequences for Leadership Targeting)," 3; Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," 161.

[194] Anna Simons, "Making Enemies, Part Two," *The* American *Interest* 2, no. 1 (September/October 2006): 37.

[195] Simons, 37.

behavior is according to an interpretation of the Quran frames their organizational values.[196] To substantiate this claim, Mousseau makes the following observation of the AQ operatives who executed the September 11, 2001 terror attacks:

> Fifteen of the nineteen hijackers who struck at the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, were from Saudi Arabia, one of the richest countries in the world. Most of them were highly educated and appeared to have had ample opportunities for building materially rewarding lives.[197]

With this context, western value systems of material well-being and productivity do not resonate with AQ and ISIS.[198]

Comparatively, Mexican drug cartels value material well-being the most. A quick search of the Internet shows countless photos of cartel heirs and members posing with gold plated guns, luxury purses full of money, lavish cars, and exotic animals.[199] For the Islamic terrorist, this opulence not only represents polar opposite of his value system, but the expunging of corrupting influences has also been built into the religious based value system since the 7th century.[200] Admittedly, Osama Bin Laden and Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman attempted to distance themselves from a perceived stigma associated with wealth. El Chapo has referred to himself as a "simple farmer" and Bin Laden distanced himself from being known as the son of a Saudi billionaire.[201] The difference however, is Bin Laden's image of humility was the product of devoted dedication to his extreme religious value system and to bond closer to his organization. El Chapo, on the other hand, pursued this narrative

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196 Simons, 37-38.

197 Michael Mousseau, "Market Civilization and Its Clash with Terror," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002-2003):7–8.

198 Simons, "Making Enemies, Part Two," 38.

199 Janet Davenport, "Mexico's Most Powerful Cartel Members Show off Their Lavish Lifestyles Online," *Mirror*, September 9, 2015, https://www.mirror.co.uk/incoming/gallery/mexicos-most-powerful-cartel-members-6412913.

200 Simons, "Making Enemies, Part Two," 39.

201 Kate Zernike and Michael T. Kaufman, "Born into Privilege, Bin Laden Became the Face of Global Terror," *The New York Times*, May 3, 2011, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D05E0DE163AF930A35756C0A9679D8B63. ; Michael B. Kelley, "The World's Most Notorious Drug Kingpin: 'I'm A Farmer,'"" *Business Insider*, March 31, 2014, http://www.businessinsider.com/el-chapo-guzman-im-just-a-farmer-2014-3.

only after his first captured to distance himself from cartel activities.[202] Without question, ISIS and AQ, as opposed to Mexican drug cartels, hold starkly different perceptions on how organizations define their value systems. Even more, ISIS or AQ perceive the cartels' value system as being the antithesis of their own.

How AQ and ISIS view time as compared to cartels may also contribute to why these organizational value systems are so divergent. AQ and ISIS and other religiously motivated terrorist groups see themselves as engaged in Jurgensmeyer's so-called "cosmic war."[203] He defines cosmic war as "larger than life" with a theory of victory that is "only a hope for the distant future" and that "the struggle is blocked and cannot be won in real time or in real terms."[204] For cartels, on the other hand, immediate gratification and life in the now appear to be consuming themes based on: their lust for consumer goods, "El Chapo" being considered old within the drug trade (age 55) at the time of his capture,[205] and research by the UCLA showing that the drug violence within Mexico has actually reduced the life expectancy of men within particular Mexican States.[206] Although terrorist and cartel members both have a reasonable expectation of an abbreviated life, they view time and the meaning of life in remarkably different ways.

H. INNOVATION AND COOPERATION

The study of Mexican drug cartels, ISIS, and AQ's perspectives on innovation indicates the unlikelihood of creating a cooperative relationship. According to Australia's Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, "open innovation is a business model that

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[202] Kelley, "The World's Most Notorious Drug Kingpin: 'I'm A Farmer'."

[203] Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, Fourth Edition* (California: University of California Press, 2017).

[204] Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 184, 202, 294.

[205] Patrick Radden Keefe, "Cocaine Incorporated," *The* New *York Times Magazine*, June 15, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/magazine/how-a-mexican-drug-cartel-makes-its-billions.html.

[206] Enrique Rivero, "Mexico's Murder Rate Has Led to Decrease in Men's Life Expectancy, UCLA-led Study Shows Increases in Women's Average Life Expectancy Have Slowed," UCLA Newsroom, January 5, 2016, http://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/mexicos-murder-rate-has-led-to-decrease-in-mens-expectancy-ucla-led-study-shows.

encourages you to collaborate with external partners."[207] As such, envisioning an organization seeking to create *new* external relationships without an innovative organizational mindset is difficult. The following section of this thesis outlines the organizational perspective of drug cartels, AQ and ISIS on how innovation relates to their organizational ideology.

AQ and ISIS tend to avoid innovation, as it represents a threat to AQ and ISIS's fundamental ideological value systems. To understand this position requires understanding the context of its religious ideology. First, according to Mousseau, "some observers argue that because the Koran offers instructions 'for even the minutiae of everyday life,' Islamic culture has tremendous difficulty dealing with change:"[208] suggesting an inherent resistance to innovation. Similarly, Simons posits that AQ and similar religiously motivated terror organizations are "nativist," which constitutes a belief system that opposes Westernization and "a fierce desire to protect corporate Muslim identity."[209] Furthermore, nativism "is a response to accommodationist…whose willingness to change abrades on certain traditions and beliefs that threaten corporate identity and the way people *should* live."[210] To AQ or ISIS, practices of innovation compete with the societal norms established within the Quran, and present a threat to the established order of the group.

Ultimately at the macro-level, innovation represents perversion of purity of the Koran, and as such, resistance at the ideological roots of AQ and ISIS. As an example of this, AQ has used propaganda quoting the Koran as, "Whosoever does not judge according to what God has sent down, those are the infidels."[211] From the perspective of AQ or ISIS, innovation appears to have little value within the organizations' ideologies.

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[207] "Collaborate and Innovate," Australian Government, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, November 15, 2017, https://www.business.gov.au/info/run/innovation/collaborate-and-innovate.

[208] Michael Mousseau, "Market Civilization and Its Clash with Terror," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002-2003): 8.

[209] Anna Simons, "Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror," *The American Interest* 1, no. 4 (Summer 2006):7–8.

[210] Simons, "Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror," 14.

[211] Simons, 18.

Contrary to the previous paragraphs, some may argue that AQ and ISIS have shown a tendency to innovate. Notable examples of terrorist innovation do exist: AQ's training manual, *Military Studies in the Jihad Against the Tyrants* show "a paramount desire to become more efficient by learning from the experiences of friends and enemies alike."[212] Additionally, AQ transformed airliners into guided missiles on September 11, 2001. Lastly, ISIS's equipping of commercial drones with grenades[213] all seem to demonstrate innovation occurring within the groups. In response to behaviors such as this, Jenkins suggests that "terrorist will alter their tactics in an incremental way to solve specific problems created by security measures."[214] Furthermore, according to Simons, nativists only feel threatened by innovation that "disrupt social relations and thereby morally or spiritually endanger them."[215] Classifying tactical changes as innovation or adjustments, is somewhat a moot point. What is important to recognize is that AQ or ISIS are willing to make organizational change, so long as it does not affect its root ideological values.

Comparatively, for Mexican drug cartels, innovation does not threaten core values, rather innovation appears to be a complementary behavior for organizational ends. Because cartels focus on profit maximization, their ideology should be looked at through classic economics. For the sake of simplicity, classic economics theory outlines a process that is comprised of "rational agents [who] (1) possess stable and consistent preferences, (2) compare the cost and benefits of all available options; and (3) select the optimal option, that is, the one that maximizes output."[216] Innovation in business which can "help you save time and money, and give you the competitive advantage to grow and adapt your business in the marketplace" complements cartel ideology. The Los Zetas provide an excellent

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[212] David C. Rapport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, ed. Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 49.

[213] Laris Brown, "ISIS Arms Toy Drones with Grenades to Bomb Iraqi Troops: RAF Pilots Hunt down the Devices Amid Fears the Weapons Could Be Used against British Troops," *DailyMail.com*, January 20, 2017, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4141872/ISIS-arms-toy-drones-GRENADES-bomb-Iraqi-troops.html.

[214] Brian Michael Jenkins, *Future Trends in International Terrorism*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1985), 19. https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P7176.html.

[215] Simons, "Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror," 16.

[216] Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," 80.

example of innovation at the macro level within the Mexican Drug trade. The Los Zetas beginning in 2002, by integrating absolute brutality and psychological warfare ushered in a new era of cartel operations and behaviors.[217] According to Logan:

> This criminal brand marked a historical benchmark in Mexico as a time when the old school of a 'gentleman' drug lord, who would avoid bloodshed in the streets and only sell drugs away from children, was over, and the beginning of the new school of young drug lords who favored violence over discretion had begun.[218]

Through innovation, the Los Zetas changed the operating environment of cartels forever. While this may be argued to be a tactical innovation, the unprecedented violence in Mexico, and the adoption of highly violent behaviors throughout the cartels suggests that they are highly innovative at the highest echelons, and the innovation of the Los Zetas represents an absolute paradigm change in the conduct of the drug business. In addition to this, cartels much like AQ and ISIS, have shown a propensity to innovate at the tactical levels. Examples of cartel innovation at the tactical level, to name a few: the employment of tunnels, drones, air cannons, catapults, and ultralight aircraft.[219] According to Border Protection data between 2011 and 2016, upwards of 534 ultralight aircraft and 309 speedboats had been used in the transportation of drugs across the U.S. border.[220] Additionally, between 1990 and March 2016, 224 drug tunnels had been identified, some of which included rail and ventilation systems.[221] The mass employment and what appears to be continual adoption of innovative methods of transporting drugs into the United States not only appears to be highly regarded for cartels but also an imperative in organizational practices.

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[217] Samuel Logan, "Preface: Los Zetas and a New Barbarism," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 5 (November 2011): 720, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.620809.

[218] Logan, "Preface: Los Zetas and A New Barbarism," 720.

[219] Ron Nixon, "By Land, Sea or Catapult: How Smugglers Get Drugs across the Border," *The New York Times*, July 25, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/us/drugs-border-wall.html.

[220] Nixon, "By Land, Sea or Catapult: How Smugglers Get Drugs Across the Border."

[221] Nixon.

I. IDEOLOGY AND POSITIONAL AUTHORITY IMPEDE COOPERATION

The way in which AQ and ISIS place ideology at a level of moral superiority above all other civilizations has been alluded to in previous sections of this chapter. However, the topic requires a detailed look, as it presents the most compelling argument for impeding cooperation between a cartel and ISIS or AQ. According to Kanter, within inter-business cooperative relationships, a mindset of equality between organizations fosters a thought process that each of the "parties bring something valuable to the relationship and deserve to be heard."[222] If they were to cooperate, this concept seems to be a fundamental problem for both Cartels and ISIS or AQ to reconcile. First, as previously established, nativist groups such as ISIS or AQ "use morality as the yardstick by which to measure societal superiority."[223] Additionally, this fundamental belief appears to be fixed. As Simons rhetorically points out, "how can a group of people sure of their moral superiority ever submit to anyone else's moral code?"[224] Considering this, cartels under their current ideology and normative behaviors cannot create a situation in which they would be equal to ISIS or AQ within a relationship without adopting a Islamist world view.[225] Because issues such as innovation, adaptation, and excessive consumerism are so deeply entrenched in the ideological identity of cartels and serve recruitment and a tool to maximize market opportunity, the idea of Mexican cartels becoming pious Muslims is laughable.

J. IDEOLOGICAL COMPROMISE: IS IT POSSIBLE?

However unlikely it may be, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that ISIS or AQ is willing to depart from its hardline position on ideology to achieve cooperation with a Mexican drug cartel. Available empirical evidence suggests that doing so adversely affects the sustainability and continued mobilization of the groups. Data provided by The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence from 2015, in which they interviewed 58 separate ISIS fighters, showed that "un-Islamic Behaviors" of

[222] Kanter, "Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances," 117.

[223] Simons, "Making Enemies, Part Two," 37.

[224] Simons, 38.

[225] Simons, 37.

the group to include: conducting business deals; failing to adhere to group ideals, and standards of conduct; and not creating a utopian Islamic society were core motivators for defection.[226] While the study identified other motivations for defection, "practically all of them argued that the group hadn't lived up to their (political, religious, or material) expectations, and that IS' actions and behaviors were inconsistent with its own claims and ideology."[227] Even more recently, and likely partially a byproduct of losing territory (a previously established hallmark of ISIS) defection rates amongst ISIS appear to be growing. In June 2017, according to Western diplomats, about 150 former foreign fighters for ISIS have attempted to return to their countries of origin.[228] Even more recent reporting from September 2017 suggests that "more and more ISIS members are defecting from the terrorist group."[229] Lastly, according a former ISIS member and Saudi national, associated with the exodus, "most want to leave, like me. A lot of them realize that the group they were with tricked them" and that "there are not many who believe that the people that they were with were on the right path."[230] Much like ISIS, AQ has suffered adversely from the defection. According to Jacobson in "Why Terrorist Quit," "Despite al-Qa`ida's reputation for ferocity and secrecy and its purported esprit de corps, many individuals have quit the organization."[231] Based on these data points, the organizational ideology creates a form of social contract between the group and its members, which causes people to quit when the contract is violated. Considering this, and the divergence in ideological value systems, cooperation with a Mexican drug cartel would require compromising the social contract

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[226] Peter R. Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narrative of Islamic State Defectors," (London: The International Centre for The Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2015), 11. http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ICSR-Report-Victims-Perpertrators-Assets-The-Narratives-of-Islamic-State-Defectors.pdf.

[227] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narrative of Islamic State Defectors," 10.

[228] "ISIS Defectors Asking Western Governments for Help Returning Home," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 7, 2016, http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/06/07/isis-defectors-asking-western-governments-for-help-returning-home.html.

[229] Vincent Alocada, "ISIS News: More Members of Terrorist Group Defect, Realize They Were Tricked," *The Christian Post*, September 13, 2017, https://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-news-more-members-of-terrorist-group-defect-realize-they-were-tricked-198967/.

[230] Alocada, "ISIS News: More Members of Terrorist Group Defect, Realize They Were Tricked."

[231] Michael Jacobson, "Why Terrorist Quit: Gaining from Al-Qa'ida's Losses," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 8 (July 2008), https://ctc.usma.edu/why-terrorists-quit-gaining-from-al-qaidas-losses/.

between ISIS/AQ and its members. As such, this would result in defections from the group: disrupting continued mobilization.

K. CONCLUSION

The previous sections have shown how critically important the ideological value system is to both cartels and terror groups. While taking different forms, they provide shaping of organizational behaviors and create a quasi-social contract between the organization and its members. Departures from ideological value systems create intra-group friction points, which in turn, may result in defection from the organization. As previously mentioned, illicit group sustainability requires continuous mobilization of resources. One mechanism of continued mobilization is cooperation. Yet cooperation, as Kanter points out, requires perceived equality between groups is required. With this in mind, AQ and ISIS would violate their ideological value system to work with a drug cartel. The specific breaking point that causes defection from ISIS or AQ is unknown and individual. Despite this, more than likely, these non-Islamic behaviors are far less egregious than those of a drug cartel. To achieve cooperation, requires some level of compromise; however, by its very nature, and as pointed out by Simons earlier in this chapter, ideology is relatively uncompromising. As a result, cooperation from an ideological perspective is unlikely between Mexican drug cartels and ISIS or AQ.

V. DECISION MAKNG AND DEFECTION: IMPACTS ON COOPERATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Understanding where organizational authority and decision making reside in AQ, ISIS and cartels can provide significant insight in determining the likelihood, and, if possible, at what level cooperative relationships could form between the groups. As shown in chapter one of this thesis, attempts to categorize the organizational structures of cartels, AQ, and ISIS is highly debated, inconclusive, and fluid. Furthermore, because parallels with the formal business sector have been established between terror groups and cartels throughout this thesis, and "hierarchy and networks co-exist in all business firms,"[232] attempting to place these organizations in fixed structures, and the strict terms of a network or hierarchy is futile. Lastly, as Shapiro points out, an organization can be highly interconnected through networks and still retain positional hierarchy.[233] Conversely, a hierarchy may only exercise control over certain functions and leave the remaining responsibilities to subordinates.[234] More so than attempting to assign structural typologies to these groups, examining the levels at which organizations make decisions may be valuable. Because literature frequently correlates the structure type with specific forms of decision making, the use of hierarchy and network within this section cannot be avoided; however, the main question explored in this section is whether these organizations employ a centralized, decentralized or some combination in decision-making. Depending on the magnitude of the decision, AQ, ISIS, and drug cartels all show attributes of being decentralized and centralized in their decision-making processes; further, creating cooperative relationships represents the high end of decision making, thereby making it unlikely.

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[232] Jacob N. Shapiro, "Organizing Terror: Hierarchy and Networks in Covert Organizations," (unpublished paper, last modified August 23, 2005), 5. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/adb5/b887e645e54f374fba325b765adcc827ff23.pdf.

[233] Shapiro, "Organizing Terror: Hierarchy and Networks in Covert Organizations," 8.

[234] Shapiro, 8.

B. A REVIEW OF DEFINITIONS

First, centralized and decentralized authority within an organization must be defined. According to Shapiro, a centralized organization is one in which "the center directly controls operations and resources."[235] Furthermore, "an organization is decentralized when the center provides only ideological guidance and cells self-fund or coordinate among themselves regarding operations and resources." To substantiate my arguments on the forms of control these groups use within the organizations, these definitions will be applied to the observed behaviors of AQ, ISIS and drug cartels throughout the remainder of this chapter.

C. CARTEL LEADERSHIP AND FRANCHISING

The image of cartel kingpins calling all of the shots of their organization is a thing of the past;[236] however, cartel leadership still does exert some control. According to Wainwright, "recently some Mexican cartels have begun a radical process of decentralization."[237] The decentralization of the drug cartels provides several advantages to the organization. First, decentralization "keeps their overhead low and reduces potentially risky connections to top management."[238] Second, drug commodities can be fragile. As an example, "the coca plant is a fragile plant that can only grow in certain latitudes, and so it means that a business model to address this market requires you to have decentralized, international production."[239] Lastly, it enables global distribution on a mass scale that allows drugs to reach consumers with high levels of certainty and timeliness.[240] Unlike the historical cartels of Colombia that attempted to centrally control all facets of the business, Mexican drug cartels have gained organizational and market advantage in these

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[235] Shapiro, "Organizing Terror: Hierarchy and Networks in Covert Organizations," 12.

[236] Tom Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 136.

[237] Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, 136.

[238] Guy Lawson, "How the Cartels Work: Mexican Drug Lords Have Transformed the Narcotics Trade in America—and the DEA Appears Powerless to Stop Them," *Rolling Stone*, April 18, 2011, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/how-the-cartels-work-20110418.

[239] Canales, "The Deadly Genius of Drug Cartels," 5:47.

[240] Canales, 5:47.

arenas by outsourcing and franchising.[241] Franchising for a cartel is similar to that of a large corporation in which local businesses are established that benefit from the larger corporation's strategic guidance, branding, advertising, and business model. In return, the central organization reaps portions of the smaller business' proceeds.

The Los Zetas provide an example of how highly franchised cartels can be within Mexico, which in turn decentralizes some, but not all, decision making. According to Wainwright, "the Zetas have decided not to send their own representatives into new markets to set up criminal outpost from scratch and instead have adopted local gangsters in their club, as franchisees."[242] Harvard Business School Professor, Rodrigo Canales describes the Zetas franchising in the following way:

> They let people know that they are there, and they go to the most powerful local gang and they say, 'I offer you to be the local representative of the Zeta brand.' If they agree…they train them and they supervise them on how to run the most efficient criminal operation for that town, in exchange for royalties.[243]

While this model suggests a highly decentralized organization, it comes at some cost to the franchisee in sacrificing some of its autonomy and control to the core structure of Los Zetas. First, under this model, the local cell has to agree to a 'solidarity pact' in which "they will fight for the Zetas if a war breaks out with another cartel."[244] Second, the cell is responsible for protecting the organizational identity or Zeta brand in its organizational behaviors. For the Zetas in particular this means that "corporate" Zetas expect that the local branch will control all criminal activity, not just the drug trade. Furthermore, according to a UN report, "new cells are responsible for preserving the 'good name' of the Zetas by chastising with violence (death) the use of the Zetas' trademark by unauthorized criminal operators"[245] to mitigate free riding from potential competitors. When these quid pro quo

[241] Canales, "The Deadly Genius of Drug Cartels," 5:47.

[242] Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, 136.

[243] Canales, "The Deadly Genius of Drug Cartels," 7:07.

[244] Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, 136-137.

[245] Wainwright, 139.

factors are taken into consideration, the organization begins to show the attributes of simultaneous and delineated centralized and decentralized decision-making authorities.

Even more telling is the role that the Los Zetas' history plays within how they structure themselves and make decisions. The Los Zetas were a spin off cartel which formally represented the enforcement arm of the Gulf Cartel and was predominately comprised of Mexican ex-military.[246] When the group separated from the Gulf Cartel, given its military background, Los Zetas possessed a "chain of command with a very clear hierarchy…that allowed them to supervise and operate across many, many markets very effectively, which is the essence of what chain of commands seek to do."[247] Based on data derived from Campbell and as reflected in Figure 3,[248] the Zetas' organizational structure and decision making process show a clear delineation in authority. However, as one moves down the structure, authority appears to be less direct. Starting from the top, the structure is as follows: (a) The *Zetas Viejos* are the top leaders within the organization and are also original members; (b) *Zetas Nuevos* "are the enforcers" and "operate on the front lines, taking orders from the Zeta Veijos commander under whom they serve;" (c) *Cobras Nuevos* and *Lil' Zetas* are new members assigned under the authority of the *Zetas Nuevos*; (d) *Productividad* are a sub-network of white-collar individuals who conduct cover ups of Zeta activity; (e) *Halcones* serving as intelligence collectors have a loose affiliation to the organization.[249] Regardless of the perspective, be it from a structural lens or business model lens, Los Zetas show both the integration of centralized and decentralized decision making processes within the organization design. While the Zetas only represent a single cartel, and for that matter a more modern cartel, some of the same hybrid decision making can be seen within other and older cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel.

[246] Canales, "The Deadly Genius of Drug Cartels," 7:07.

[247] Canales, 7:07.

[248] Campbell, "Los Zetas: Operational Assessment," 58.

[249] Campbell, 59-60.

Structure	Role
Zetas Veijos	Original Members of the organization and top leadership positions
Zetas Nuevos	Enforcement Arm of the Organization
Cobras Nuevos	New members assigned under the authorities of Zetas Nuevos
Lil' Zetas	New members assigned under the authorities of Zetas Nuevos
Productividad	Sub-network and white collar affiliates employed to "cover up" Zetas activities
Halcones	Loose affiliates employed for intelligence collection activities

Figure 3. Los Zetas Organizational Structure[250]

These hybrid decision-making structures are not solely the product of new cartels such as Los Zetas. The Sinaloa Cartel not only has a long operational history within Mexico,[251] but also shows some of the same behaviors in decision making and decentralization. The Sinaloa Cartel, also referred to as the Sinaloa Federation, as the name suggests, encompasses not only cooperative relationships with regional partners, but also distributed decision making. Prior to his arrest, El Chapo shared top leadership positions with other kingpins such as Ismael Zambada "El Mayo" Garcia, and Juan Jose "El Azul" Esparragoza.[252] As such, *InSight Crime* posits that "The Sinaloa Cartel is not a hierarchical structure. El Chapo, El Azul and El Mayo have all maintained their own separate but cooperating organizations."[253] As a result of this, recent reflections of the cartel have noted that the cartel "has developed a reputation for organizational resiliency, often functioning like a confederation of allied factions, rather than as a traditional top-down, hierarchical cartel."[254] Former DEA agent, Mike Vigil went as far as to say that, 'they're pretty much like a Walmart or global corporation like McDonalds in that the authority moves through

[250] Adapted from Campbell, "Los Zetas: Operational Assessment," 59-60.

[251] Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, 139.

[252] "Sinaloa Cartel," Insight Crime, January 24, 2018, https://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/sinaloa-cartel-profile/.

[253] Insight Crime, "Sinaloa Cartel."

[254] Christopher Woody, "With 'El Chapo' Guzman Locked up Abroad, the Shift in Mexico's Cartel Underworld Grinds On," *Business Insider*, February 6, 2017, http://www.businessinsider.com/sinaloa-jalisco-new-generation-cartel-balance-power-mexico-2017-2.

the entire organization, the decision making capability."[255] Much like Los Zetas, the Sinaloa Cartel also shows attributes of decentralization through franchising. During the course of an interview, Wainwright identified franchising behaviors from within the Sinaloa Cartel when a former franchisee of the cartel stated that in the course of doing business with in Sinaloa he maintained "freedom to go about their business as they chose."[256] While seemingly a clear case of distributed authority throughout the organization, some factors still suggest that the top echelons of the organization are critical to the decision-making process.

Despite some decentralization, top positions within the Sinaloa Cartel retain some authority. If the Sinaloa Cartel were truly a flat organization with distributed decision-making, then recent incarceration of El Chapo would have little effect on the organizations' stability. However, El Chapo's arrest has set off an external power struggle with the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. This suggests a level of organizational weakness in Sinaloa. Furthermore and internally, El Chapo's incarceration has created a power vacuum between El Chapo's sons and Ismael "El Mayo: Zambada.[257] In the case of the Sinaloa Cartel, perhaps the day-to-day decision making is decentralized; however, the positional authorities associated with top leadership remain important.

More broadly and across cartels, an argument for the importance of central authorities within the organizations can be made. First, one does not need to look far to find publications pointing out the names of founders and current heads of cartels: suggesting that these individuals to some degree or another, have a visible presence and role within the organizations. Second, Mexico has adopted "king pin" strategies in breaking up cartels. Specifically, during his tenure, Pena Nieto's administration has claimed to have arrested or killed 107 of the 122 high-ranking members of organized crime within the

[255] Woody, "With 'El Chapo' Guzman Locked up Abroad, the Shift in Mexico's Cartel Underworld Grinds On."

[256] Wainwright, *Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel*, 140.

[257] Woody, "With 'El Chapo' Guzman Locked up Abroad, the Shift in Mexico's Cartel Underworld Grinds On."

state.[258] As the drug violence continues, and the flow of drugs appears to go unchecked, a counter-argument could be made that these individuals are of low value; however, other organizations besides the government place a high value on these individuals. Top figures within cartels are not just targeted by the state, but also by rival cartels. As an example, during a power struggle, El Chapo had a leader within the Juarez Cartel, Rodlofo Carrillo Fuentes killed, and in return, the Juarez Cartel killed El Chapo's brother Arturo.[259] Be it from the state or a rival organization, though it may not result in absolute collapse, the efficacy of removing cartel leaders is disruptive to organizational stability. This leads to the conclusion that the authorities of these individuals transcend figure head status.

D. AQ LEADERSHIP AND FRANCHISING

Al Qaeda's organizational approaches to decision making when compared to a drug cartel have a stark similarity but vary from the perspective of brand management and free riding. Wilson Center author, Cameron Glenn reflects on the post Bin Laden era Al Qaeda leadership authorities in the following way:

> [Ayman al] Zawahiri does not claim to have direct hierarchical control over al Qaeda's vast networked structure. Al Qaeda's core leadership seeks to centralize the organization's messaging and strategy rather than to manage the daily operations of its franchises. But formal affiliates are required to consult with al Qaeda's core leadership before carrying out large-scale attacks.[260]

In this quote, a level of high-level leadership authority in decision making is shown, but also expresses decreased control of decision making among AQ's periphery. Consistent with this theme is that AQ's metamorphosis from a tightly knit organization into a broad ideological movement. According to McCants, "It [AQ] is a portable ideology that is entirely fleshed out, with its own symbols and ways of mobilizing people and money to the

[258] Patrick Corcoran, "Mexico President Reprises Controversial Kingpin Strategy," Insight Crime, June 6, 2017, https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/mexico-president-reprises-controversial-kingpin-strategy/.

[259] "Juarez Cartel," Insight Crime, November 17, 2015, https://www.insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/juarez-cartel-profile/.

[260] Cameron Glenn, "Al Qaeda v ISIS: Leaders & Structure," The Wilson Center, September 28, 2015, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/al-qaeda-v-isis-leaders-structure.

cause. In many ways, you don't have to join the actual organization anymore to get those benefits."[261] This shows that, AQ as opposed to a drug cartel, such as Los Zetas, is not concerned about adherence to a strict organizational brand and potential consequences resulting from organizational free riding. Rather, AQ appears to see value in free riding because of its greater good of exporting a larger radical Islamic social movement. One does not need to look beyond the name of the group to see its organizational perspective towards its role. Al Qaeda, from Arabic to English literally translates to "the base," that can be metaphor for other things to grow or be built from. Consistent with its name and this organizational design, Burke posits that "one of the original purposes of al-Qaeda was to build a coalition of groups around the world and overcome disunity…as one of the principal causes of the failure of the militant movements."[262]

Because AQ, unlike a drug cartel, is not trying to turn a profit and represents an ideological foundation, cells and members within the organization develop organically without resource requirements from AQ's core. As such, this minimizes organizational impacts at the highest echelons of the organization and therefore mandates minimal oversight. This does not suggest that AQ is absolute in decentralizing its decision making and its structure. AQ still retains some leadership structure over the entirety of the organization which includes: Zawahiri, "a Shura council, as well as committees for military operations, finance, and information sharing."[263] Furthermore, this central leadership has been responsible for the organizational pivot in priority from focusing on the attacking the "far enemy" espoused by Bin Laden to placing a higher priority on Islamic movements in what Zawahiri refers to as the "near enemy."[264] It is important to recognize that both centralization and decentralization guide organizational decision making, and different decisions are made at different levels. As a further example, Al Nusrah Front (an AQ affiliate in Syria) received strategic direction from AQ's leader Zawahiri to focus its efforts

[261] Ben Hubbard, "The Franchising of Al Qaeda," *The New York Times*, January 25, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/26/sunday-review/the-franchising-of-al-qaeda.html.

[262] Jason Burke, *The New Threat: The Past, Present, and Future of Islamic Militancy* (New York: The New Press, 2015), 62.

[263] Glenn, "Al Qaeda v ISIS: Leaders & Structure."

[264] Burke, The New Threat: The Past, Present, and Future of Islamic Militancy, 106.

on combating the Assad regime in Syria, yet simultaneously used Syria as a planning and staging area for core AQ members to conduct attacks on the west, without the direct involvement of Al Nusrah.[265] What this suggests is that AQ bifurcates organizational efforts, and those of greatest importance remain at the highest levels – again showing both centralized and decentralized decision making processes of the organization.

Specifically, the topic of cooperation for AQ shows that the decision to cooperate with other groups is a decision that is held by the top levels of the organization. Within 15 months of assuming command of AQ, Zawahiri had dispatched core AQ members to Libya and Egypt to "build contacts with local networks there and offer them assistance."[266] Furthermore, Zawahiri established a formal partnership with al-Shabaab, a relationship that had been previously rejected by Osama Bin Laden.[267] In looking as these particular instances, it becomes obvious that the decision to cooperate with other groups comes from the top of the organization and depends on the interest and strategy of the core leadership positions.

E. ISIS LEADERSHIP AND FRANCHISING

ISIS's decision-making processes are highly centralized but do show some signs of moderate decentralization. The most obvious representation of centralization is the declaration of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi as the Caliphate. The supreme authorities of the Caliph are highly relevant because the of rigid adherence of the organization to its ideological value system. According to the Wilson Center, "the caliph has virtually unchecked authority."[268] While ISIS does include a Shura Council (much like AQ) that can remove Baghdadi from power, his power in reality remains unchecked because he appoints all members of the council.[269] Despite the authorities of the Caliph, given ISIS's vastness

[265] Thomas Joscelyn, "Pentagon: Al Qaeda Veteran in Syria Was Planning Attacks Against the West," *FDD's Long War Journal*, (November 2016), https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/11/al-qaeda-veteran-in-syria-was-planning-attacks-against-the-west.php.

[266] Burke, The New Threat: The Past, Present, and Future of Islamic Militancy, 108.

[267] Burke, 108.

[268] Glenn, "Al Qaeda v ISIS: Leaders & Structure."

[269] Glenn, "Al Qaeda v ISIS: Leaders & Structure."

and performance of state like functions within Iraq and Syria some decentralization in decision making is required. As such, the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism* describes ISIS's management as "a matrix structure, or an organization with complex command systems characterized by multiple lines of authority."[270] Figure 4[271] shows how functional area authorities are established within ISIS. While this may appear to grant high levels of autonomy to both regional commands, and in particular areas of functional decision making, the authority of the Caliph over the entire structure remains intact. To this point, it should be noted that "directives from the Central leadership team and the Caliph still need to be communicated"[272] throughout the entire organization. Additionally, this dissemination is so important to the organization, that a specific council handles it. The Security and Intelligence Council is responsible for managing "communications to ensure that the top management team a) has direct knowledge of potential plots and b) can deliver critical messages across geographic boundaries."[273] This model allows ISIS organizational nodes to have some autonomy and increase its survivability,[274] yet ultimately remains under the authorities of the central system.

[270] Ligon, et al., The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles, 9.

[271] Adapted from Ligon, et al., *The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles*, 10.

[272] Ligon, et al., The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles, 8.

[273] Ligon, et al., 8.

[274] Ligon, et al., 8.

Leadership Structure	Function
Shura Council	9 to 11 member advisory board; functional leads who approve Caliph's appointments and communicate leadership directives down the chain of command.
Military Council	Design and implement military strategy; with one exception, every head (Deputy to Caliph) has been a former Saddam regime element leader
Security & Intelligence Council	Subcommittee to military council, but with operational autonomy. SIC provides personal security to top management team and oversees mail communication among Da'esh provinces
Sharia Council	Has two subcommittees: prevention of vice (e.g. Hisba/religious police) and promotion of virtue (dawa, also over education council)
Media Council	Has primary editorial responsibility for guidance and official "old" media (e.g. al-Furqan radio); made up of mainly non-Iraqi members
Education Council	Develops textbooks (both religious and practical training), guidance literature, and indoctrination methods
Governors	Administrative and military control in their provinces
Iraq Regional Command	Military commanders in regions (no administrative responsibilities
Syria Regional Command	Military commanders in regions (no administrative responsibilities)
Cabinet	Various functional leads such as finance minister, prisoner affairs, governors of provinces
Top Management Team	Caliph and his key advisors

Figure 4. Leadership and Structure of ISIS[275]

Unlike AQ and more like drug cartels, ISIS guards against free riding behaviors by closely controlling its brand management. With the expansion of ISIS's periphery beyond Syria and Iraq coupled with the accessibility of the Internet and social media, brand management has become all that more important to the organization.[276] To address this, ISIS exerts control over brand management through its Media Council and the management of ISIS cooperative relationships from centralized control.

ISIS's Media Council contributes to its organizational image and branding in several ways. First, according to Whiteside, "IS puts its most talented commanders into the media department,"[277] which validates the value that the group places on managing branding and its organizational image. Second, ISIS's "media leadership created the

[275] Adapted from Ligon, et al., The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles, 10.

[276] Craig Whiteside, *Lighting the Path: The Evolution of the Islamic State Media Enterprise (2003-2016)*, (The Netherlands, The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, 2016), https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ICCT-Whiteside-Lighting-the-Path-the-Evolution-of-the-Islamic-State-Media-Enterprise-2003-2016-Nov2016.pdf, 26.

[277] Whiteside, Lighting the Path: The Evolution of the Islamic State Media Enterprise (2003-2016), 24.

boundaries of acceptable levels of violence and justified their use with religious citations, in effect virtually training its subsidiaries."[278] Lastly, as a means of ensuring quality control and preservation of the correct ISIS image, "the media department serves a key role in validating media, disputing fakes, and developing external surrogates who can assist in policing frauds."[279] Similar to the example provided regarding the Los Zetas and its franchise management, ISIS to is highly concerned about the preservation and maintenance of its public image and does so through centralized control.

In addition to ISIS's Media Council contributing to brand management, the top echelons of the organization closely manage cooperative relationships that can be considered as franchises. Much like AQ and Mexican drug cartels, ISIS top leadership retains all authorities that pertain to the establishment of cooperative relationships or franchises. Several historical franchises substantiate the centralized control of cooperative relationships by the top echelon of the organization. When a terrorist organization offers a pledge of *bay'a* to ISIS it is offering a pledge of allegiance to the Caliph.[280] Upon acceptance of this pledge ISIS formally brings the group under the Caliph's authorities.[281] In this way, these groups represent a franchise of the organization; however, the nuance is it is a bottom up rather than a top down directed franchise (that is more common in the Mexican drug cartels).

Many terrorist organizations around 2014, to include Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) and various other terrorist groups in both Arab and non-Arab countries made pledges of *bay'a* to ISIS; however, these pledges were not universally accepted.[282] On November 13 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made a speech accepting some, but not all, of these pledges of *bay'a.*[283] Al-Baghdadi did not accept TTP at this time, and conditionally accepted pledges

[278] Whiteside, Lighting the Path: The Evolution of the Islamic State Media Enterprise (2003-2016), 26.

[279] Whiteside, 26.

[280] Daniel Milton and Muhammad al-Ubaydi, "Pledging Bay'a: a Benefit or Burden to the Islamic State?" *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 3 (March 2015): 2.

[281] Milton and al-Ubaydi, "Pledging Bay'a: a Benefit or Burden to the Islamic State?," 2.

[282] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 4.

[283] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 4.

from organizations based in non-Arab countries.[284] The conditional basis included: "1) the appointment or recognition of leadership by the Islamic State and/or 2) the establishment of a direct line of communication between these groups and the Islamic State so that these groups could 'receive information and directives from [al-Baghdadi].'"[285] In the case of Boko Haram, in July 2014, the organization expressed broad support for ISIS without expressing *bay'a* towards the group.[286] As such, it was not until March 13, 2015 that a formal relationship between ISIS and Boko Haram became established after the leader of Boko Haram, Abubaker Shekau officially pledged *bay'a* to ISIS on March 8, 2015.[287] Additionally, it should be noted that the acceptance of the relationship by ISIS came from an official spokesman of the organization.[288] Lastly, perhaps coincidently but unlikely, the organizational relationship between ISIS and Boko Haram occurred only after Boko Haram's media practices closely resembled that of ISIS.[289]

These case studies provide several interesting insights into how the organization manages its cooperative relationships. First, based on pledges of *bay'a* not being universally accepted from organizations within Arab countries, ISIS is cautious of who it cooperates with—even in instances of close ethnic alignment. Second, for organizations that are not based in Arab countries, the central authorities place additional mechanisms of control over the cooperating group to ensure compliance with ISIS's identity. Third, in all of the mentioned cases, the central authorities of ISIS specifically control the establishment (or not) of the relationships. Fourth, parity between Boko Haram's media management and that of ISIS may have provided confidence for ISIS that its organizational brand would be preserved in the relationship.

[284] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 4.

[285] Milton and al-Ubaydi, "Pledging Bay'a: a Benefit or Burden to the Islamic State?" 4.

[286] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 6.

[287] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 6.

[288] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 6.

[289] Milton and al-Ubaydi, 6.

F. MANAGING AGENCY: THROUGH THE COST OF DEFECTION

Thus, far, this chapter has focused on where organizational control resides within AQ, ISIS, and Mexican drug cartels; however, the topic of how these organizations enforce adherence to organizational decision making requires examination. By doing so, a more complete understanding of the likelihood of cooperative relations occurring without the endorsement of the central leadership of the organizations can be derived. This area of focus helps to identify how these violent sub-state groups manage agency. ISIS and Mexican drug cartels through their organizational behaviors have shown both the will and ability to more strongly punish behaviors of defection more than AQ.

Mexican drug cartels use the credible threat of violence to achieve adherence to the specific rules of the organization. According to the DEA's Former Chief of International Operations, Michael Vigil, orders are often implied or orally communicated and "are ruthlessly enforced by 'lugartenientes' (lieutenants), better known as plaza bosses. Organizational members quickly learn the rules, or they are dealt with violently."[290] While this analysis comes from outside the organization, the policy appears to be well understood from within the cartels themselves. While being interviewed, a "local Sinaloa Warlord" provided the following description and scenario of the cost of violating the orders and directives of El Chapo Guzman:

> We just do our job, here we respect the big bosses if we're told something's wrong we sort it out, we don't rebel. There's no point in rebelling against El Senor [El Chapo] here. Once or twice people have – people didn't obey El Senor. That was it for them. Let me give you an example, if I take the product to the border, move it with my own money, work with people who aren't ours I risk getting a warning and after that's you dead.[291]

Consistent with the perspective of Vigil and the Sinaloa cartel warlord, Wainwright further notes that Mexican drug cartels are known for "dishing out their most horrible violence to traitors from their own ranks."[292] From three different vantage points, it is readily apparent that drug cartels enforce the most extreme cost on defection behaviors within their

[290] Vigil, "The Structure and Psychology of Drug Cartels."

[291] Abbott, "Drug Lord the Legend of Shorty Full Movie," 48:47- 49:38.

[292] Wainwright, Narconomics: How to Run a Drug Cartel, 45.

groups—death. While this appears to be the highest price one can pay from deviating from the directives of the organization, the cartels also increase the risk of defection by extending the threats of violence to family members to ensure compliance with its outlook.

While being interviewed, an undercover DEA agent had the following observation of how cartels exploit familial ties to ensure compliance in its members. According to him, "part of the way the cartels retain control is through fear. Mexicans will cooperate to a certain level, but they won't talk about Sinaloa. They know their family back home will be killed."[293] For the cartels, this strategy in controlling individual behaviors has been highly successful. According to the same *Rolling Stone* interview, as of 2011, "Senior DEA agents acknowledge privately that they have yet to flip a single significant snitch from the cartels."[294] Simply, because of cartel control and punishment mechanisms—"Mexicans don't flip."[295]

Much like cartels, ISIS shows a strong will and capability in enforcing its organizational authorities over its group members. ISIS's policy towards behaviors that defect from the core leadership's authorities is apparent in ISIS's media release declaring al-Baghdadi as the Caliph. According to Milton and al'Ubaydi's research and analysis through the *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,* the following quote directly speaks to ISIS's policy towards mitigating defection behaviors:

> Be very wary of breaking the ranks. For you to be snatched by the birds would be better for you than to break the ranks or take part in doing so. And if anyone wants to break the ranks, split his head with bullets and empty its insides, whoever he may be.[296]

Furthermore, ISIS's policy is not limited to fiery rhetoric, its organization structure enforces this policy and punishes transgressions in behavior of its members. The *Hisbah*, a sub-committee under the Sharia Council or more commonly referred to as the religious police of ISIS, is the "civil administration security forces who investigate transgressions

[293] Lawson, "How the Cartels Work: Mexican Drug Lords Have Transformed the Narcotics Trade in America – and the DEA Appears Powerless to Stop Them."

[294] Lawson.

[295] Lawson.

[296] Milton and al-Ubaydi, "Pledging Bay'a: a Benefit or Burden to the Islamic State?" 3.

and mete public punishment as a deterrent."[297] Adding further credibility to ISIS's policies towards defection, while not confirmed through ISIS press releases, the mainstream media has reported that ISIS has beheaded or otherwise killed its own members in Afghanistan, Syria, and Northern Iraq as a result of individuals being suspected of behaviors that have undermined the organization's operations.[298] As examples of this, in July 2016, ISIS ordered the killing of seven of its own members by first bounding their hands and feet and then throwing them into boiling water for fleeing a battle.[299] Additionally, in June 2016, ISIS courts punished 19 soldiers for fleeing a battle by executing them.[300] In addition to showing the brutality and costs associated with defection, the two examples also show at what level the punishment is issued—central authorities of the organization. Much like cartels, ISIS has shown not only the will to enforce control throughout its ranks, but also the means to do so by punishing deviant behavior with cruel death. As such, much like cartels, defection comes at an extremely high cost.

Al Qaeda's process to enforce control resembles ISIS and Mexican drug cartels in some ways, but also include some softer or bureaucratic approaches. As an example of AQ killing their own, in June 2016, AQ in Yemen killed two of its members for espionage; however, other media outlets posit "the real reason behind their death was that the two wanted to split from the organization and return to Saudi Arabia."[301] The specific reason for the killings is moot, the individuals were killed for behaviors outside of the expected norms of the group. However, killing people as a punishment mechanism is not the only approach the AQ employs to exert its central control.

AQ has shown a historical precedence to use administrative processes to try to maintain control over its group. Shapiro states, "leaders of al-Qa'ida, for example, have

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[297] Ligon et al., The Jihadi Industry: Assessing the Organizational, Leadership, and Cyber Profiles, 9.

[298] Jack Moore, "ISIS Beheads 15 of Its Own Fighters in Afghanistan," *Newsweek*, November 23, 2017, http://www.newsweek.com/isis-beheads-15-its-own-fighters-afghanistan-720749.

[299] Gareth Davies, "Seven ISIS Fighters Who Fled the Battlefield Are Boiled Alive as Punishment in Iraq," *DailyMail.com*, July 5, 2016, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3675285/Seven-ISIS-fighters-boiled-alive-fleeing-battlefield-Iraq.html.

[300] Davies, "Seven ISIS Fighters Who Fled the Battlefield Are Boiled Alive as Punishment in Iraq."

[301] Mohamed Jarrah, "Ways ISIS, Qaeda Kill Their Militant Members," *Al Arabiya*, May 2, 2017, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2017/05/02/Ways-ISIS-al-Qaeda-kill-their-militant-members.html.

attempted to use auditing to check up on their agents."[302] One example of this can be derived from a 1999 email correspondence between al-Zawahiri (at the time second in command of AQ) and an AQ in Yemen cell leader.[303] In the email, al-Zawahiri expressed discontent with the cell leader's spending habits and expense reports.[304] While this could be considered a low level of defection in behavior, and the response was proportionate from AQ central, even larger transgressions have been handled through a war of words.

Probably the most notable war of words between leadership with AQ was in 2005 between Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zawahiri believed that al-Zarqawi's tactics of beheading individual was counterproductive to the goals of AQ, as such, via written correspondence, he *asked* al-Zarqawi to stop.[305] While al-Zarqawi's response to al-Zawahiri is unknown, based on al-Zarqawi's public narrative at the time,[306] and the ultimate splitting of ISIS from AQ, al-Zawahiri seems to have been ignored. Successful or not in deterring deviant behavior, this exemplifies AQ's attempt to use more than physical force to control the behaviors of its members.

G. CONCLUSION: ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF AUTHORITY ON COOPERATION

Typecasting AQ, ISIS, or Mexican drug cartels into neatly constructed organizational designs such as a hierarchy or a network is debated among scholars. Despite this, understanding where, to what extent, and how decisions are made within organizations provides valuable insight in understanding the likelihood of these groups forming cooperative relationships. Based on the information provided on past cooperative relationships, it can be reasonably concluded that if AQ or ISIS were to cooperate with a Mexican drug cartel, then the decision would have to come from the top of the organization.

[302] Shapiro, The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations, 31.

[303] Shapiro, 31.

[304] Shapiro, 31.

[305] Shapiro, 37-38.

[306] Lia, "Jihadi Strategists and Doctrinarians," 126.

It may be argued that in the case of AQ, an organization that does not closely manage its franchises, the possibility of decentralizing the decision to cooperate could occur at a lower echelon. However, if this were the case, the issues of AQ's deeply entrenched ideology would have to be overcome. While AQ may be more decentralized in its organizational decision making, because of its "portable ideology,"[307] but as previously established such ideology presents its own challenges in forming cooperative relationships.

ISIS from a decision-making lens appears to have a very low likelihood of forming a cooperative relationship with a drug cartel. Examples from this chapter show that when opportunities are presented to cooperate with seemingly like-minded individuals without ideological barriers, ISIS enters these relationships with a high level of caution out of fear of losing control of its brand image. From this, one may conclude that if ISIS finds it difficult to cooperate with similar groups, its ability to cooperate with a vastly different group, such as a drug cartel, is extremely low.

Lastly, although the unit of analysis of this thesis is at the organizational level, hypothetically, suppose that cooperation occurred without the knowledge of the core leadership. Based on the information provided, this seems to be highly unlikely as well. First, AQ, ISIS, and Mexican drug cartels all have mechanisms in place to harshly punish defection, so the cost of defection is high. However, if an individual believed the cost of defection was worth it, this would represent not only defection from the organization's decision-making authorities, but also from the organization's ideology or identity. This would suggest a profile of an individual who believes so strongly in creating a cooperative relationship between organizations that the value of the relationship is: (a) worth risking his own life, and (b) worth more than the organization's ideology and identity to the individual, and (c) a belief in a cause that does not conform to the expectations of the group from which he is defecting. It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which this would manifest. However, assuming it did, this individual (or group of defecting individuals) would cease to represent the groups analyzed within this thesis and is outside this scope of research.

[307] Hubbard, "The Franchising of Al Qaeda."

In conclusion, from the perspective of organizational decision making and the ways in which these decisions are enforced, cooperation between a Mexican drug cartel and AQ or ISIS remains difficult to achieve. Furthermore, on the off chance that an individual did defect to create a cooperative relationship, it would come at significant risk to himself and would represent something other than the groups described here.

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VI. CONCLUSION

A. FINDINGS

This thesis has studied the likelihood of cooperative relationships forming between Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS. This thesis finds that broadly cooperative relationships between these groups are highly unlikely. This conclusion has been reached through analysis of the following factors: (a) organizational strategies towards the United States, (b) group identity, (c) ideological value systems and (d) organizational decision-making structure and process as well as (e) the conditions that successfully foster cooperative relationships within the private sector. Specifically, the following hypotheses have been tested and found the outcome that cooperation is unlikely to result between these groups. In review, Hypothesis 1 of this thesis is:

> The organizational identity factors of: strategy, ideology, and group identity (centered around trust), between AQ and ISIS and Mexican drug cartels impede the likelihood of operational cooperation between the groups.

This hypothesis has been proven true and is summarized in Figure 5. In most instances, the factors of compatibility between Mexican drug cartels, AQ, and ISIS seem polar and, in some instances, compete absolutely. The most notable is perhaps how the United States fits into the strategies of AQ and drug cartels. This divergence in outlook represents a significant cleavage between the groups and is simply an irreconcilable difference between them: impeding the groups from forming a cooperative relationship. In some instances, one group or another is in a position where the group's outlook leans towards the possibility of creating a cooperative relationship. However, because cooperation requires willing participation from both parties, the second party's stance prohibits the forming of a relationship. As an example of this, ISIS can afford to remove the United States from its strategic narrative, but the relationship with a cartel remains incompatible due to the risk that it would pose to U.S. drug markets for the cartels if the relationship were found out – regardless of ISIS' position towards the country. Conversely, cartels could compromise partially on their ideology to create an effective relationship with ISIS, but ISIS ideology is neither compromising nor will it accept partial conformity. Thus, cooperation would

require cartels to conform entirely to ISIS's ideological values—a scenario that is unpalatable for cartels for obvious reasons. Lastly, AQ and drug cartel's willingness to compromise on ideologies for organizational gain seems to be the single highest chance of cooperation. However, other factors such as organizational identity and strategic outlook towards the United States prohibits the relationship from forming. Myopically, this factor appears to present the highest chance of providing a foundation for cooperation, yet the other factors are inescapable thus making the relationship unlikely. Lastly, the topic of organizational identity, a topic that underpins many of the other factors discussed, universally impedes cooperation. According to business literature, trust between groups is a requirement to create cooperative relationships. However, in the case of cartels and terror groups, while the employ similar tactics to do so, their modus operandi is one that fosters in group trust through dissuading trust of out groups. This practice by its very design undermines best practices in forming cooperative relationships between groups. Furthermore, this practice is fundamental to both groups and the chance of this successful practice being modified or abandoned is unlikely.

SCENARIO:	Al Qaeda & Drug Cartel		ISIS & Drug Cartel	
Factors *of Cooperative Compatibility:*				
Strategy & The United States	**Incompatible** U.S. represents a core target within strategic narrative.	**Incompatible** Moderate tranquility in U.S. important to market sustainment.	**Partially Compatible** U.S. represents a secondary target outside of core strategic narrative.	**Incompatible** Moderate tranquility in U.S. important to market sustainment.
Organization Identity	**Incompatible** In-group dynamics deny fomenting out-group relationships.		**Incompatible** In-group dynamics deny fomenting out-group relationships.	
Organization Ideology	**Partially Compatible** Willing to make ideological compromise for strategic advantage. Yet, cognizant of implications of ideological drift.	**Partially Compatible** Willing to compromise for profit maximization, but difficult to reconcile against U.S. strategic outlook and markets.	**Incompatible** Hard line ideology provides no room for flexibility in world view. Value systems directly compete with cartels.	**Partially Compatible** Willing to compromise for profit maximization, but difficult to reconcile against uncompromising ideological value system.
Organizational Decision Making	**Partially Compatible** Centralized decision making on cooperative relationships but only partial management of franchises with comparatively low levels in defection punishment.	**Incompatible** Centralized decision making with tight management of franchises and comparatively high levels of punishment for defection.	**Incompatible** Centralized decision making with tight management of franchises and comparatively high levels of punishment for defection.	**Incompatible** Centralized decision making with tight management of franchises and comparatively high levels of punishment for defection.

Figure 5: Likelihood of cooperative relationships forming between Mexican drug cartels and AQ or ISIS based on the factors of: strategy towards the United States, organizational identity, ideology, and decision making.

Figure 5. Likelihood of Cooperative Relationships Forming between Mexican Drug Cartels and AQ or ISIS

The validation of Hypothesis 2 further substantiates the author's thesis statement that cooperative relationships between drug cartels and AQ or ISIS is an unlikely outcome. Hypothesis 2 of this thesis is:

> Organizational structure decreases the likelihood of operational cooperation between the groups.

While some believe that terrorist groups and cartels are highly networked, and because of this decentralized nature the organizations struggle with control of its members. As such, the organizations struggle with principle agency problems within the group's franchises. However, this thesis has shown that these organizations cannot be neatly type cast into hierarchical or network diagrams. They show the attributes of both. Additionally, this thesis also establishes that a networked organization is not necessarily synonymous with decentralization in high level decision making. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 5, the centralized control in strategic decision making is held closely at the top of these groups.

In all cases, the top leadership of these groups employ mechanisms to communicate, enforce decisions and policy making, and manage group franchises. Thus, from an organizational decision making and structural perspective, cooperation remains highly unlikely. Only in the case of AQ does some discretion in authorities exist that allows room for cooperation to be created. Yet again, this requires the willingness to participate from both parties, and drug cartels simply do not allow that level of autonomy within their organizations.

In conclusion, creating organizational alignment along the factors studied within this thesis show significant hurdles to cooperative relationships. In some cases, these differences are so paramount to the organization that compromising them is not even a consideration. Some categories studied within this thesis may bring these organizations closer together to form cooperative relationships. Yet, where one hurdle is overcome a different blockade presents itself.

B. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While the likelihood of cooperative relationships between these groups is highly unlikely, *if* they did manifest, the threat has the potential for catastrophic consequences for U.S. national security. Because of this, the author suggests the following policy recommendation for consideration. As established, cooperative relationships require participation from both parties. As such, a clear and concise narrative targeting a single side of the potential cooperative relationship will have the desired effect of deterrence. Deterring terrorists, especially AQ and ISIS seems aspirational at best, but cartels who have so much to lose from the United States may present a captive audience for a strategic narrative. A strategic narrative that specifically targets the cartels should influence decision making in their consideration of cooperating with AQ or ISIS. This narrative should emphasize the following points: (a) albeit a low likelihood, the U.S. government is aware of the potential confluence between these groups, (b) the United States is actively seeking to identify relationships between the groups, and (c) if a relationship exists, or is forming, it comes with substantial risk and consequence to cartels and their U.S. drug markets. So long as this topic remains a perceived interest, the U.S. government can achieve deterrence.

C. FUTURE RESEARCH

Admittedly, this thesis narrowly looks at AQ's core organization, ISIS, and keeps the Mexican drug cartels in a broad context. As such, future research should continue to look at other terror organizations, and more specifically into individual drug cartels in detail. For example, Hamas has been a widely reported terror organization operating within Mexico, perhaps a future question to study is what are the organizational factors that allows Hamas greater freedom of movement within Mexico. Similarly, as cited in chapter 1, AQIM has been reported to have cooperative relationships with Latin American drug producers. Is there something particular about AQIM, as opposed to AQ's core, that makes this relationship work requires in depth analysis. Researching these areas in greater detail will either continue to validate or disprove this thesis which contends strategy, identity, and ideology highly matter in the formation of cooperative relationships between Mexican drug cartels and terror groups.

Second, this thesis does not attempt to assign values to the organizational factors discussed. Perhaps, one factor matters more than another and mitigates shortfalls in one particular area. In many ways, this thesis suggests some of the basic premises of game theory. It may be worthwhile for future research to apply concepts of game theory in greater detail to help to quantitatively explain the likelihood of cooperative relationships between these groups. Lastly, while this thesis establishes that direct cooperative relationships between these groups is unlikely, further understanding of illicit networks and how they overlap through individuals without specific group affiliation warrants research. This topic may be of the greatest value to understanding how and when these groups cooperate. If the premise of this thesis is accepted, then this last topic may help to identify one of the greatest vulnerabilities in the global connections between illicit groups.

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